

Report: Decolonise the Curriculum Survey

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1 KEY FINDINGS

- 18.6% of Black Heritage students agree they feel represented by academic staff
- 57.1% Black Heritage students agree they feel a sense of belonging in the University as an institution
- 66.7% of Pakistani students feel disproportionately challenged by their studies
- 15.4% of Bangladeshi students agree that experiences from the global South are considered in their assessments
- 27.9% of Black Heritage students agreed racial inequality is acknowledged in their course
- 7.69% of Bangladeshi students agreed the impact of privilege differences is recognised in their course
- 44.2% of Black Heritage students feel safe to challenge discriminatory behaviour
- 24.4% of Black Heritage students believe the teaching methods on their course are personalised to their needs and life experiences

2 INTRODUCTION

The Decolonise the Curriculum survey was conducted to collect student feedback around different areas of decolonisation in the University of Manchester. This is to feed into the University of Manchester Students' Union's Decolonisation strategy and ensure it is data-backed and student-driven.

Students were asked about four themes that were identified as key during the creation of the decolonisation strategy which were identified through previous insight work such as a small sample size survey, as well as listening campaigns with students.

The key themes were Belonging, Academic Achievements and Assessments, Privilege and Racial Inequality and Knowledge Systems. In line with the Access and Participation plan, the target demographics for this survey were Black, Bangladeshi and Pakistani students.

2.1 METHODOLOGY

The data was collected from 12th February 2025 until 7th April 2025. There were a total of 420 respondents and the survey was promoted through a variety of channels including Students' Union email and social media channels, as well as in-person experientials. Furthermore, students from the African-Caribbean Medical Society were commissioned to aid with data collection by promoting the survey through their social channels and events.

The data was analysed by comparing the agreement percentage for each question for the whole respondent population that of each target demographic. Here, agreement percentage refers to the total percentage of respondents that indicated they either agreed or strongly agreed with a statement.

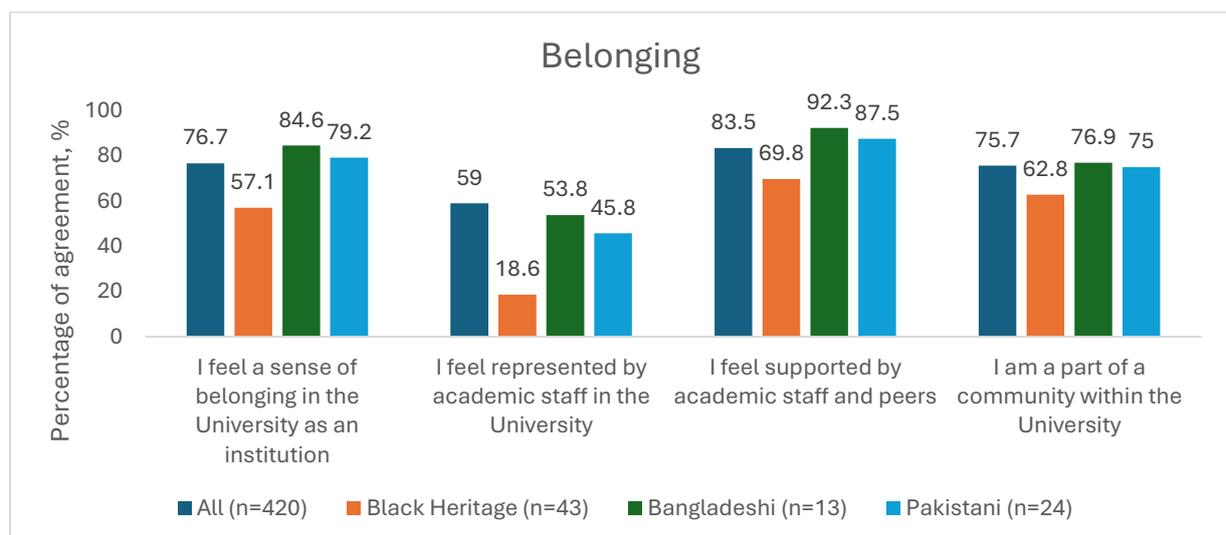
2.2 STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

FACULTY	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
FACULTY OF BIOLOGY, MEDICINE AND HEALTH	55.7%
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES	29.3%
FACULTY OF SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING	14.9%

FEE STATUS	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
UK	73.4%
INTERNATIONAL	23.4%
EU	3.19%

STUDY TYPE	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
UNDERGRADUATE	89.1%
POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT	23.4%
POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH	3.46%

3 BELONGING



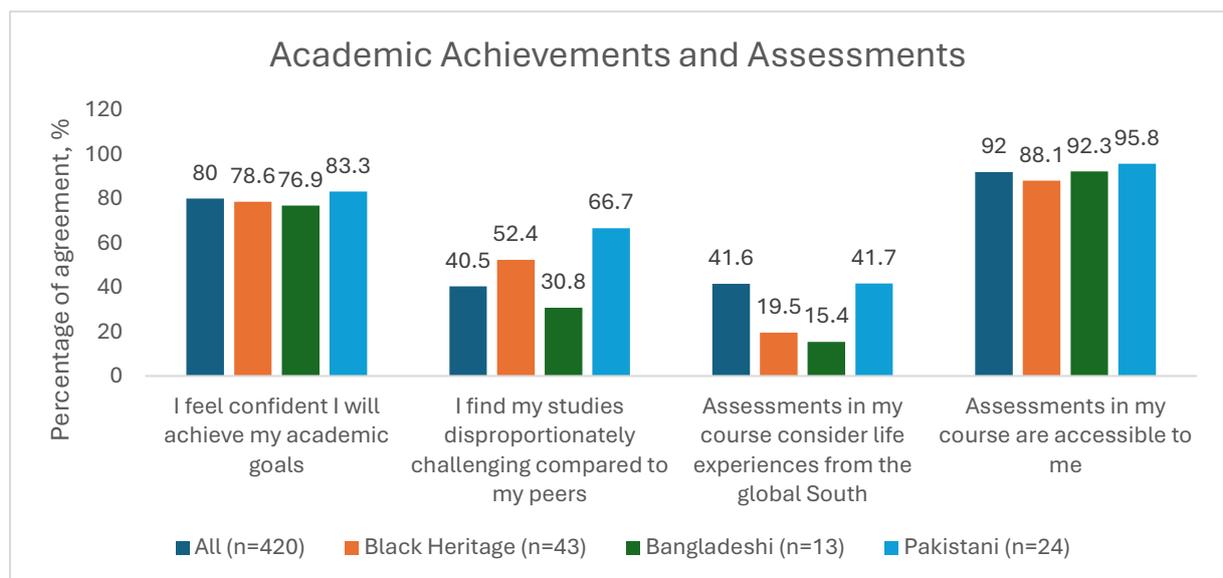
When asked about belonging, Black Heritage students had a consistently lower agreement percentage compared to the whole respondent population. Most notably, only **18.6%** of Black Heritage students (n=43) agreed they felt represented by academic staff, with no students strongly agreeing. Similarly, no Black Heritage students strongly agreed that they felt supported by academic staff and peers. This difference in sentiment strongly highlights the lack of

representation and support available for Black Heritage students, negatively impacting their university experience.

Bangladeshi (n=13) and Pakistani (n=24) students also exhibited a lower agreement rate when asked if they feel represented by academic staff, with **53.8%** and **45.8%** agreement rates respectively. This consistent underperformance across all three target demographic groups suggests an underrepresentation across the University that should be addressed to ensure strong sense of belonging for all students.

Furthermore, only **57.1%** of Black Heritage students agreed they feel a sense of belonging in the wider institution, with a slight increase to **62.8%** when thinking about other communities within the University. This suggests that, while some Black Heritage students can find a community through the form of societies or other extracurriculars, there is a lack of belonging to the institution itself.

4 ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS & ASSESSMENTS

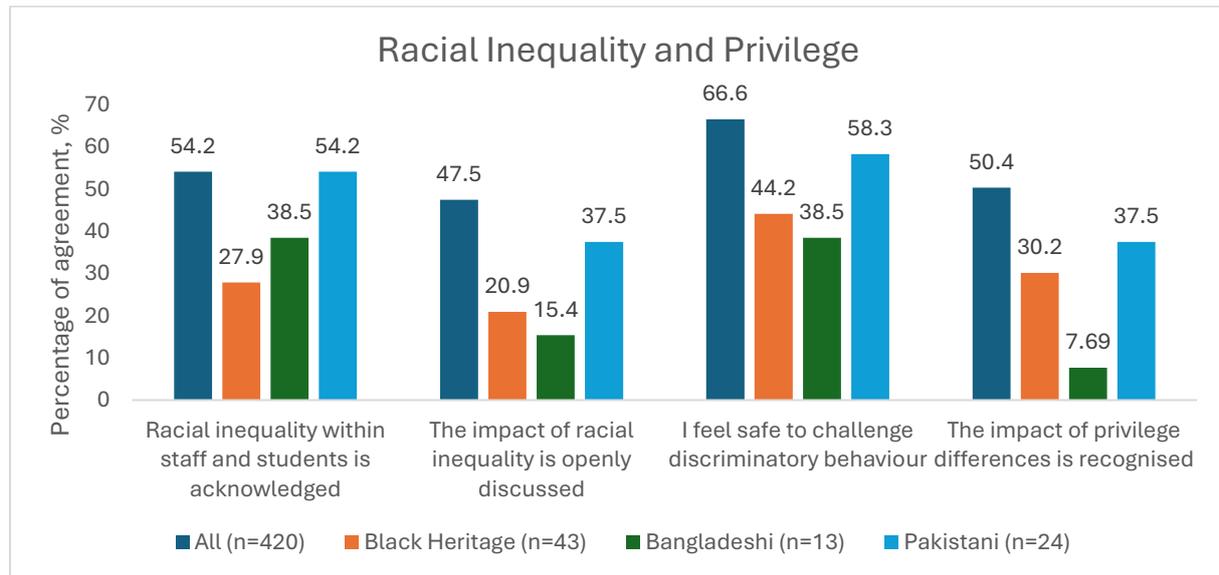


When students were asked about the perceived challenges they face in their academics, **52.4%** of Black Heritage students (n=43) agreed that their studies were disproportionately challenging compared to their peers. This was a higher agreement rate than the whole respondent population, suggesting a disparity in the challenges faced by students. Pakistani students (n=24) also feel disproportionately challenged by their studies, with **66.7%** of respondents agreeing. It is vital for the University to consider the systemic, institutional barriers that create a challenging environment for students from underrepresented demographics and make intentional efforts to dismantle them.

Furthermore, only **19.5%** of Black Heritage students (n=43) agreed that experiences from the global South are considered in their assessments, with no students strongly agreeing. This low agreement rate suggests more work needs to be done across the institution to ensure non-Western voices are included in curricula and celebrated to the same extent as their Western

counterparts. There was similarly low agreement on this topic by Bangladeshi students (n=13), with only **15.4%** agreeing and none strongly agreeing.

5 RACIAL INEQUALITY & PRIVILEGE



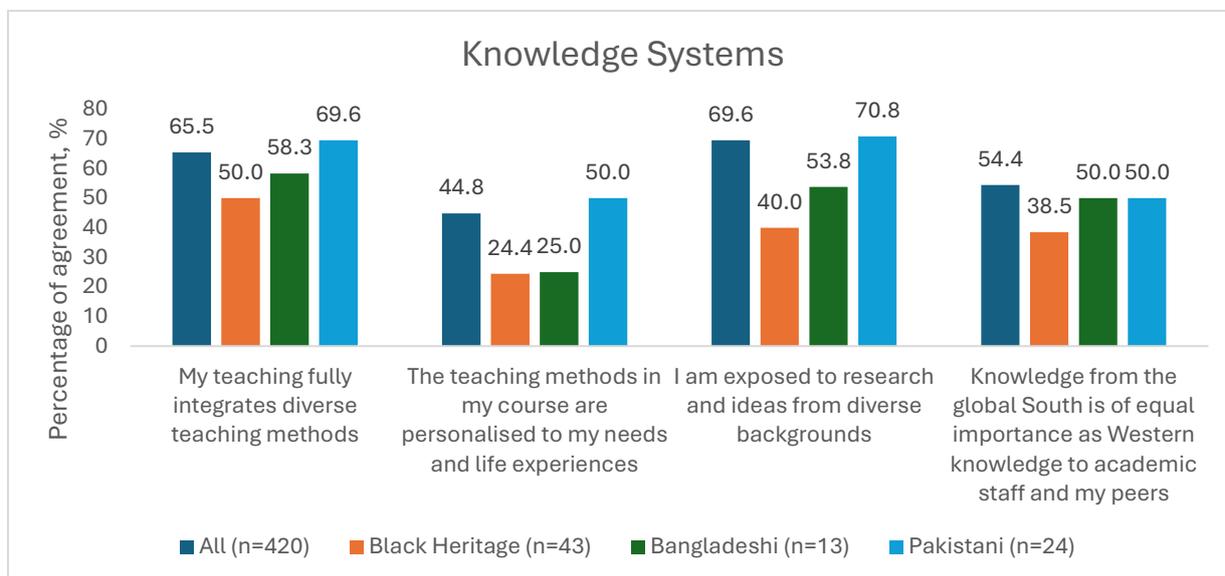
When thinking about racial inequality and privilege in their academic experience, all three target demographics had significantly lower agreement rates than the whole respondent population.

Most notably, only **27.9%** of Black Heritage students (n=43) agreed racial inequality is acknowledged in their course and only **20.9%** agreed that the impact of racial inequality is openly discussed. This lack of understanding of equality disparities from staff and peers can have a detrimental impact on students disproportionately affected by these systems. The systemic racial inequality in the institution needs to be openly addressed and academics need to make a strong effort to understand its impact on students.

In a similar vein, only **37.5%** of Pakistani students (n=24) agree the impact of privilege differences is recognised in their course. This is significantly lower for Black Heritage students (n=43) and Bangladeshi students (n=13), where only **7.69%** of Bangladeshi students agreed. This links to the previous section where Pakistani and Black Heritage students reported feeling disproportionately challenged by their studies. Existing power structures need to be dismantled and rebuilt with a focus on acknowledging and overcoming barriers due to privilege to ensure students from underrepresented backgrounds are not disadvantaged and their unique lived experiences are considered.

Only **58.3%** of Pakistani students (n=24) feel safe to challenge discriminatory behaviour, with this dropping to **44.2%** for Black Heritage students (n=41) and **38.5%** (n=13) for Bangladeshi students. The existence of such an unsafe environment has a negative impact on students in these target demographics and continually allows discriminatory behaviour to exist without consequences. Stronger, more accessible reporting mechanisms need to be in place designed specifically for these target demographics, and the institutional culture needs to shift to prevent this discriminatory behaviour from existing in the first place.

6 KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS



When asked about their teaching experience and exposure to knowledge systems Black Heritage students had a lower agreement rate compared to the whole respondent population. Only **50.0%** of Black Heritage students (n=43) agree their teaching integrates diverse teaching methods and only **24.4%** believe the teaching methods on their course are personalised to their needs and life experiences. Also, only **38.5%** agree that knowledge of the global South is considered of equal importance to western knowledge.

Similar low agreement rates were present for Bangladeshi students across all questions. This low agreement rate across these target demographics suggests there is a lack of diversity in teaching methods and curriculum content which leads to a limited understanding of the world by students. Diverse research and teaching should be fully integrated in curricula to provide a comprehensive understanding to students and ensure it is personalised and considerate of all lived experiences.

7 APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY

Here we provide definitions for terms that readers might be unfamiliar with.

Decolonisation (in the context of Higher Education): Confronting and challenging the colonising practices that have influenced education in the past, and which are still present today.

Global South: heritage from Africa, Latin America, and some parts of Asia

Privilege: unearned advantages that individuals or groups experience in society based on certain characteristics such as race, gender or other social identities.