



The impact of Covid-19 and BLM on Black, Asian and ethnically diverse creatives and cultural workers

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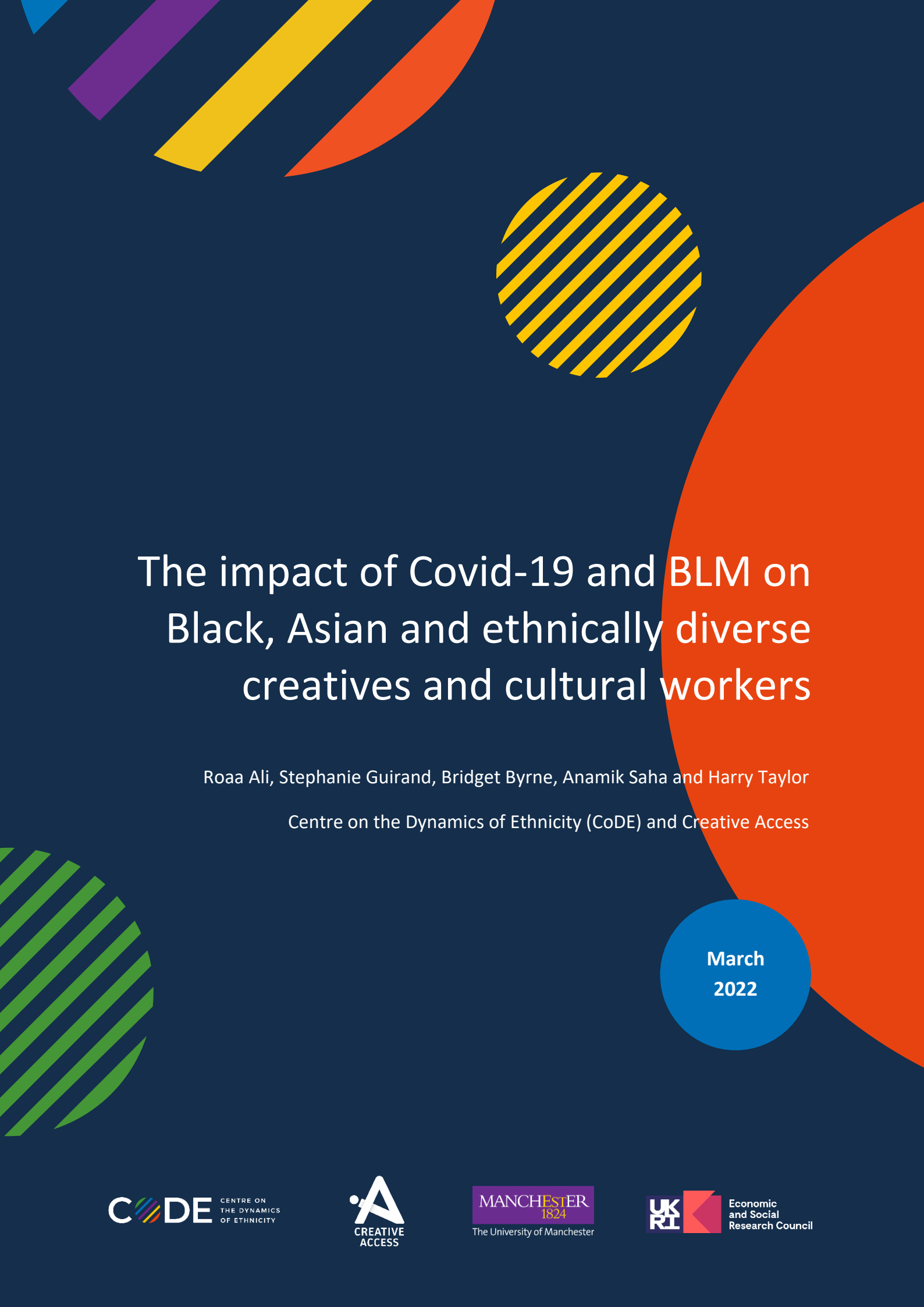
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The impact of Covid-19 and BLM on Black, Asian and ethnically diverse creatives and cultural workers

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Centre on the Dynamics of Ethnicity (CoDE) and Creative Access

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Creative Access (<https://creativeaccess.org.uk/>) is a leading diversity, equity and inclusion organisation in the UK, providing progressive career support and development for talent from communities under-represented in the creative industries. Creative Access works with employer partners to build inclusive creative cultures through innovative recruitment programmes, research driven consultancy, bespoke training and much more.

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Contents

Executive summary	4
Industry recommendations	7
Policy recommendations.....	8
Introduction and methodology	9
Survey respondents (ethnicity and sector)	11
Survey respondents (ethnicity and years of experience).....	12
Impact of Covid-19 on income and job security.....	12
Impact of Covid-19 on employment: retention in and entry to CCIs.....	14
Impact of Covid-19 on mental health.....	15
Black Lives Matter during Covid-19.....	17
Racial and religious discrimination among ethnically diverse creative workers.....	19
Diversity schemes.....	21
Targeted support services most valued by ethnically diverse workers	22
Conclusion	23

List of figures

Figure 1: Percentage of ethnically diverse survey respondents, by industry sector	11
Figure 2: Industry experience of ethnically diverse respondents, by ethnic group	12
Figure 3: Response to statement 'Covid-19 has negatively affected my job security'	13
Figure 4: Respondents who agree that 'Covid-19 has negatively affected my job security' by length of experience in CClS	13
Figure 5: Changes in employment and training before, during and one year after the first lockdown of March-July 2020	14
Figure 6: Respondents who agreed that they 'couldn't stop/control worrying' either 'occasionally' or 'nearly every day' in the preceding two weeks	15
Figure 7: Respondents who had trouble relaxing 'occasionally'/'nearly every day' by ethnic group..	16
Figure 8: Percentage of respondents who agreed they had been offered more opportunities since the Black Lives Matter protests, by ethnic group	18
Figure 9: Responses to the statement 'my career in CClS has been affected by discrimination I've faced because of my ethnic and racial identity'	19
Figure 10: Responses to 'My career in the cultural and creative industries has been affected by the discrimination I've faced because of my religious identity'	20
Figure 11: Respondents agreeing that 'My career in the cultural and creative industries has been affected by the discrimination I've faced because of my religious identity'	20
Figure 12: Respondents agreeing that 'Diversity initiatives significantly benefited my career', by ethnic group	21
Figure 13: Creative Access support services rated as valuable by respondents	22

Executive summary

There is a history of patterned exclusion in the Creative and Cultural Industries (CCIs) where underrepresented groups tend to be characterised by differences of race, religion, migration, class, disability and more. Whilst the Covid-19 pandemic continues to impact the creative and cultural industries, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests of 2020 had a significant impact on the tone and politics regarding diversity and representation in the creative industries. To investigate the impacts of both the Covid-19 pandemic and BLM, researchers from Centre of the Dynamics of Ethnicity (CoDE) partnered with Creative Access to collect data about the experiences of ethnically diverse workers who use Creative Access during Covid-19 and BLM.

This report draws on survey and interview data from **Black, Asian and ethnically diverse¹ aspiring and current workers in the cultural and creative sector** collected through the Creative Access network, specifically: **720 responses to our survey** and **42 individual interviews**.

Despite potential advantages associated with membership of the Creative Access network, this research shows that respondents have experienced a negative impact following the Covid-19 pandemic, in terms of:

- a) reduced financial stability and job security;
- b) obstacles to entry, progression, and retention in the creative and cultural industries;
- c) ongoing forms of racial and religious discrimination within the industry;
- d) negative effects upon mental health.

The survey data shows that Covid-19 and the subsequent lockdowns had a tangible and worrying impact on job and financial security for ethnically diverse individuals working in CCIs. **Forty-eight per cent of all ethnically diverse respondents expressed that they are becoming financially unstable or need immediate assistance and 70% of all ethnically diverse respondents were worried about job security**. This appears to have particularly affected those with longer experience in the sector with those who have more than 10 years' experience in the sector expressing the most insecurity.

The number of respondents who reported that they were not in education, employment or training was 18 percentage points higher in March 2021 than before the first lockdown of Spring 2020. This data shows that not only did ethnically diverse people who were working, or aspiring to work, in CCIs lose employment during the pandemic, but also **those who finished their studies during the pandemic are struggling to get a job in CCIs**.

The pandemic and lockdowns have also led to a concerning impact on the migration of ethnically diverse talent within and outside CCIs. **Fifty-eight per cent of ethnically diverse respondents said that their primary source of income changed; 30% of those respondents said they have left the CCIs for another sector**.

We asked respondents to answer questions pertaining to their work circumstances before Covid-19 and during subsequent lockdowns. **The percentage of ethnically diverse respondents who were in**

employment fell dramatically from 51% before the pandemic to only 18% during the first lockdown between March – July 2020 and by March 2021.

The data showed a clear and negative impact of the pandemic on mental health with an **overwhelming majority of ethnically diverse respondents reported ‘feeling nervous, anxious or on edge’, ‘not being able to stop or control worrying’, ‘worrying too much about different things’, ‘having trouble relaxing’.**

Although there is not sufficient data to link the dip in mental health to job insecurity and financial difficulty in the sector, we speculate it contributed substantially to the issue. This assumption is supported by responses from ethnically diverse creatives who filled in the open response question.

Organisations within the cultural and creative sector responded publicly to calls for the need to address inequalities and racism in wake of the killing of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter campaigns. However, there was limited evidence of this being put swiftly into action. **Only 17% of ethnically diverse respondents agreed that more unpaid/voluntary opportunities had become available as a response to BLM and only 14% agreed that more paid opportunities had become available.**

Our interviewees were hesitant to name racism as a source of discrimination despite many examples and stories which suggested that they had personally experienced racism at work. Some ethnically diverse interviewees expressed uncertainty about what constitutes racism and struggled with definitions of racism, as a first step to acknowledge and name racist incidents.

Even with this hesitancy to acknowledge racism in the interviews, in the survey, **37% of all ethnically diverse survey respondents agreed that their careers had been affected by discrimination and only 17% of respondents disagreed.**

In addition, **a third of Muslim respondents, 17% of Sikh respondents and 15% of Buddhist respondents felt that their careers had been affected by religious discrimination.**

Industry recommendations

- The report highlights the risk of a lost generation of ethnically diverse graduates during the Covid-19 pandemic. Targeted schemes in CCIs should be launched to specifically address the loss of opportunities that 2020 - 2022 graduates, especially those from ethnically diverse backgrounds, have faced.
- Acknowledging the informal structure in CCIs and often informal modes of recruitment, it is imperative that organisations, unions and campaigners create supported networks especially for ethnically diverse creatives and cultural workers. Similarly, access to free mentoring schemes for people from ethnically diverse backgrounds in the sector should be provided, when possible, to both support professional development and build networks.
- The report highlights the racial discrimination that still exists in CCIs, despite ethnically diverse workers hesitancy to name racism. The responsibility for highlighting and dealing with racism should not be put on the few ethnically diverse individuals in the institution. Anonymous complaint systems should be put in place, overseen by a nominated individual trained in covert and overt racist behaviour. Organisations and institutions must become more aware of how the informal mechanisms (especially in hiring, recruitment and commissioning) and the social and cultural practices that characterise the sector can exclude or marginalise ethnically diverse workers. These should be considered forms of racism.
- Creative companies and cultural organisations should enhance their mental health provision and acknowledge that the Black Lives Movement is likely to have placed an added strain on ethnically diverse workers.
- Industry organisations should review any statements and actions promised as a direct response to BLM to enforce accountability and implement change. Economic investment and change of culture within an organisation will often be needed to turn statements of support into longstanding change.
- Diversity strategies are so far failing to address issues of inequality in CCIs. Organisations need to focus on sustaining progress and retention beyond short-term entry-level opportunities. Mid-senior career Positive Action should be considered and implemented.
- Organisations should adopt a diversity and inclusion charter. Charters should include clear definitions of both covert and overt racism, guidelines to protect workers from discrimination and accountability measures.
- In order to attract people from ethnically diverse backgrounds, recruitment organisations in the sector need themselves to become more diverse. Active campaigning is needed to encourage people from more diverse backgrounds to enter the recruitment industry for the creative sector.
- A key to improving the sector's diversity is ensuring people from ethnically diverse backgrounds thrive and progress into leadership. As well as data collected by government or sector bodies, individual organisations should generate data not just on employment and retention but also promotion.

Policy recommendations

- Financial incentives should be given to recruiters and organisations that use targeted schemes to address opportunity loss for 2020 - 2022 graduates. Any scheme developed should include specific actions to include graduates from ethnically diverse backgrounds.
- Guidelines for formal recruitment practices in CCIs should be issued to combat the reproduction of ethnic inequality in the sector.
- Creative companies and cultural organisations should be mandated to adopt employment targets (both for entry and senior levels) reflecting the regional and age profile of the Black, Asian and ethnically diverse population.
- A standardised template for Diversity and Inclusion charter for cultural organisations (similar to sustainability commitments) should be created with the expectation that each organisation has one.
- Similarly to the requirement for reporting on gender pay gapⁱⁱ, reporting on ethnicity pay gap should be required. One example of accomplishing this could be through updating the data requirements for the Labour Force Survey.

Introduction and methodology

In March 2020, many Creative and Cultural Industries came to a standstill during the initial national lockdown. In terms of duration and degree, the Covid-19 pandemic did not impact all sectors equally. Some industries, particularly those that are heavily venue-based such as music, performing and visual arts, were hit hardest (O'Brien, Taylor and Owen 2020)ⁱⁱⁱ. Others, such as film and television, faced significant initial disruption but were able to adapt their operations to public health measures (CoDE interviews 2020^{iv}) and some, such as publishing, experienced a boost in sales during the pandemic (Publishers Association 2020)^v while still suffering from job losses. In the music and performing arts sector, 41% of workers lost their jobs; as did 12% of workers in publishing, and 9% in film and TV (Siepel et al, 2021)^{vi}. This impact was unevenly suffered by different demographic groups with younger groups and women workers having a greater rate of job loss than male and older groups (Florisson, R. et al)^{vii}, but the precise impact on ethnically diverse workers has to date not been examined.

The gig economy structure of the creative and cultural industries has meant that many workers in CCIs have insecure work structures and are employed on short term contracts. ONS data released in 2019 shows that 88% of music, performing and visual arts occupations are self-employed with freelancers representing 27% of the workforce (Florisson et.al 2020)^{viii}. Freelancers in these sectors were significantly more impacted by Covid-19 than those working in other sectors and faced reduction in hours^{ix}.

The BLM protests from June to August 2020 which dominated international headlines after the murder of George Floyd provide a context for the research. Protesters made clear that racism is rampant in all sectors for ethnically diverse workers, and in the creative and cultural industries in particular. This follows on from well-publicised figures (ACE, 2020^x; Ofcom, 2019^{xi}) showing the underrepresentation of CCI workers. In the aftermath of the protests, many organisations publicly aligned themselves with #BlackLivesMatter, including statements of intent to improve representation. However, it remains unclear – and may be too early to tell - whether the protests and the subsequent 'reforms' will have long-lasting impacts.

To investigate the impacts of both the Covid-19 pandemic and BLM, researchers from the Centre of the Dynamics of Ethnicity (CoDE) based at the University of Manchester, partnered with Creative Access to collect data about the experiences of ethnically diverse workers who use Creative Access during Covid-19 and BLM. We surveyed **720 ethnically diverse aspiring and current workers in the cultural and creative sector** through the Creative Access network between 5 February 2021 - 16 April 2021. In addition, **42 individuals** were interviewed (some interviewees were recruited via the survey and some were identified directly by Creative Access staff).

It is important to point out that the focus of the research is evaluating the impact of Covid-19 and BLM on ethnically diverse creatives and cultural workers. The call out for participating in the survey and interviews was specifically targeted at those who identify as ethnically diverse in CCIs. Therefore, responses from white-identifying individuals were discounted. The sample of white respondents was small (357) compared to the ethnically diverse respondents (720). It was also not representative of the larger white population in CCIs as membership into the Creative Access network is open to

under-represented groups of all backgrounds. Therefore, it was not possible to make comparisons between white and ethnically diverse respondents using the current data sets.

Despite the potential cushioning provided by the support system that Creative Access offers to its members, the data tells of a worrying picture for ethnically diverse creatives and cultural workers and the impact of the pandemic on their incomes, job security and mental health. In addition, our survey showed that type of contract mattered: CCI workers with permanent PAYE contracts fared better overall during this period than workers who were not on secure contracts, or who were about to enter work in the sector. Therefore, entry, retention and progression for ethnically diverse creatives and cultural workers in CCIs is a significant concern.

To contextualise our analysis, it is important to note that all our research participants, survey respondents and interview participants, came through the Creative Access network. Creative Access is a leading diversity, equity and inclusion organisation in the UK, providing career support and development for talent from communities under-represented in the creative industries. They work with employer partners to build inclusive creative cultures including through innovative recruitment programmes, research driven consultancy and bespoke training. Members of the Creative Access network receive tailored support to enter and progress within the creative and cultural industries. In itself, this might have cushioned some of the impact of the pandemic, so although our survey respondents are not necessarily representative of ethnically diverse CCI workers, we might expect that workers who are not receiving additional support through Creative Access have not fared better and may have had worse outcomes.

Despite potential advantages associated with membership of the Creative Access network, this research shows that respondents have still experienced: a) negative impacts of Covid-19 in terms of financial stability and job security; b) racial and religious discrimination within the industry; c) negative impact of the pandemic on their mental health. The data also shows the considerable negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on entry, progression, and retention in the Creative and Cultural Industries for ethnically diverse workers.

CoDE researchers designed a 45-question survey which was shared with members of the Creative Access network. We received 1070 responses in which the respondent answered the questions on their race and ethnicity a response to the race and ethnicity questions. In addition to the survey, CoDE researchers recruited additional 42 participants from the Creative Access network and conducted semi-structured interviews with them. This report focuses on the experiences of the ethnically diverse respondents.

The ethnicity of the 720 ethnically diverse survey respondents, and the 42 interview respondents included in this report is broken down as follows:

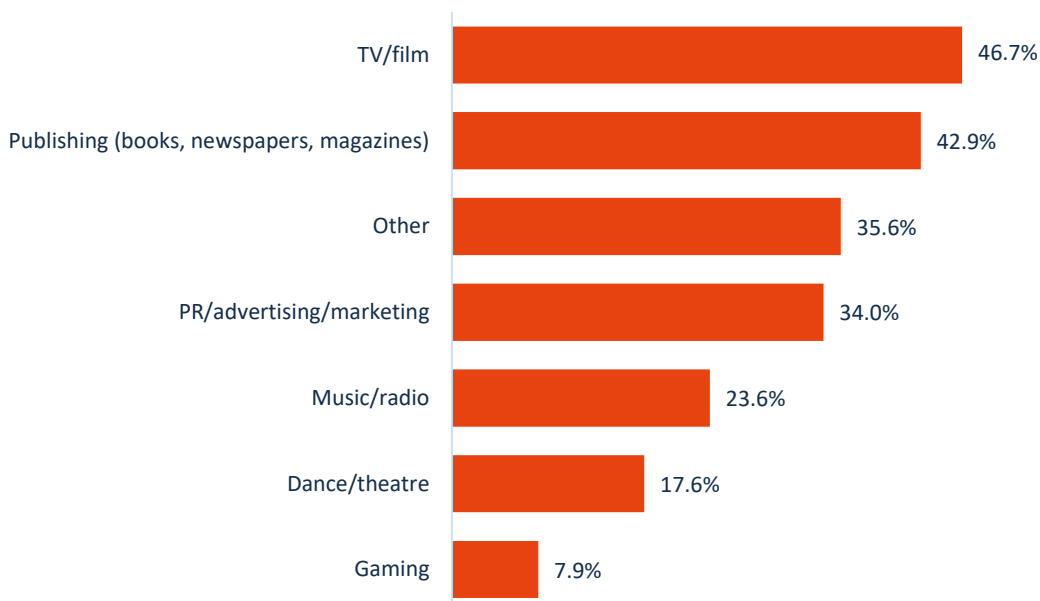
Table 1: Survey and interview respondents by ethnic group

Ethnic group	Asian (Bangladeshi, Chinese, Indian, Pakistani, & any other Asian background)	Black (Black, African, Caribbean, &/or Black British)	Mixed (any other Mixed, White & Asian, White & Black African, White & Black Caribbean)	Other (Arab, North African, Turkish, and Slavic ethnic backgrounds)
Survey respondents	268	184	197	71
Interview respondents	11	11	15	5

Survey respondents (ethnicity and sector)

Respondents were much more likely to be represented in some sectors of the cultural and creative industries than others. The sector with the highest number of ethnically diverse respondents was Film and TV industries, followed by book publishing, newspaper and magazine publishing and advertising and marketing.

Figure 1: Percentage of ethnically diverse survey respondents, by industry sector

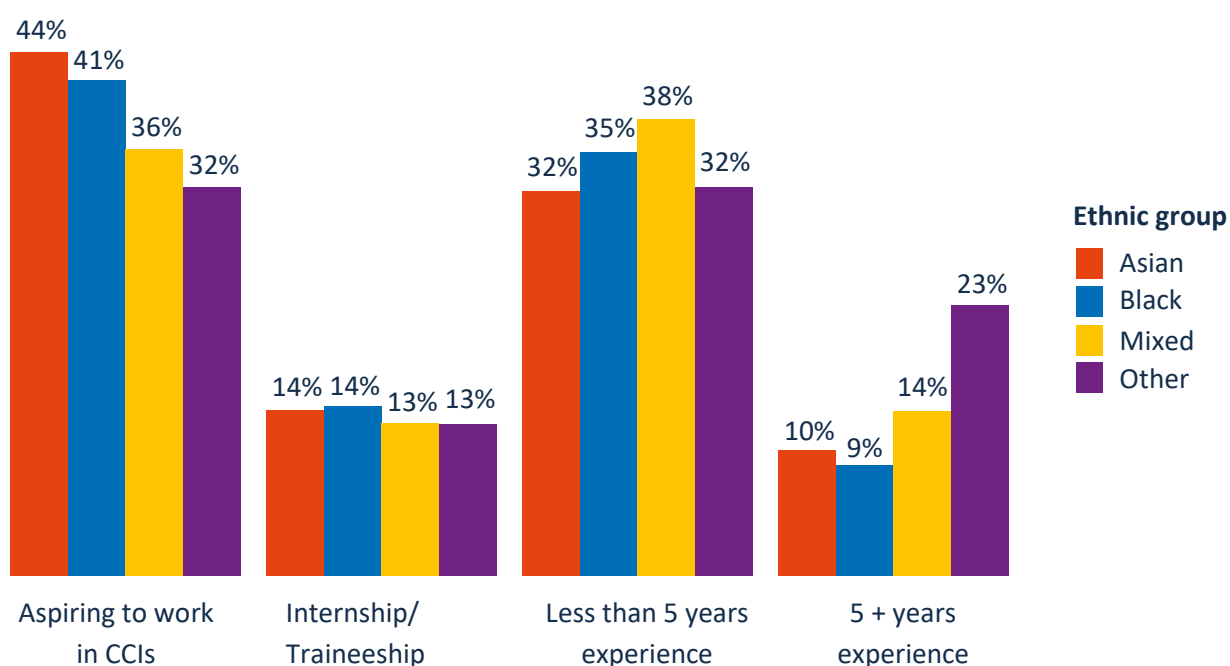


The sectors in which ethnically diverse respondents were least well represented were theatre, dance, and gaming. This was consistent across all racial categories. These figures are not necessarily representative of these sectors but reflect Creative Access users who completed the survey.

Survey respondents (ethnicity and years of experience)

One of the aims of this research was to examine the impacts of Covid-19 on the entry and retention of ethnically diverse creative and cultural industry workers. The majority of ethnically diverse respondents were either aspiring to work in CCIs, in internships or had less than five years' experience. Whilst there is long-term under-representation of ethnically diverse creatives and cultural workers, it is important to note that these figures reflect the respondents to the survey, although the survey was distributed to the Creative Access network members across all career stages.

Figure 2: Industry experience of ethnically diverse respondents, by ethnic group



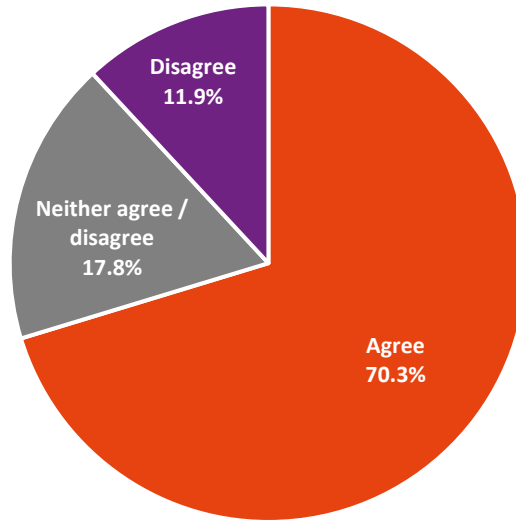
Impact of Covid-19 on income and job security

The survey data shows that Covid-19 and the subsequent lockdowns had a tangible and worrying impact on job and financial security for ethnically diverse individuals working in CCIs.

Forty-eight per cent of all ethnically diverse respondents expressed that they are becoming financially unstable or need immediate assistance. Covid-19 has also led to a concerning impact on the migration of ethnically diverse talent within and outside the Creative and Cultural Industries. Fifty-eight per cent of ethnically diverse respondents said that their primary source of income changed; 30% of those respondents said they have left the CCIs for another sector.

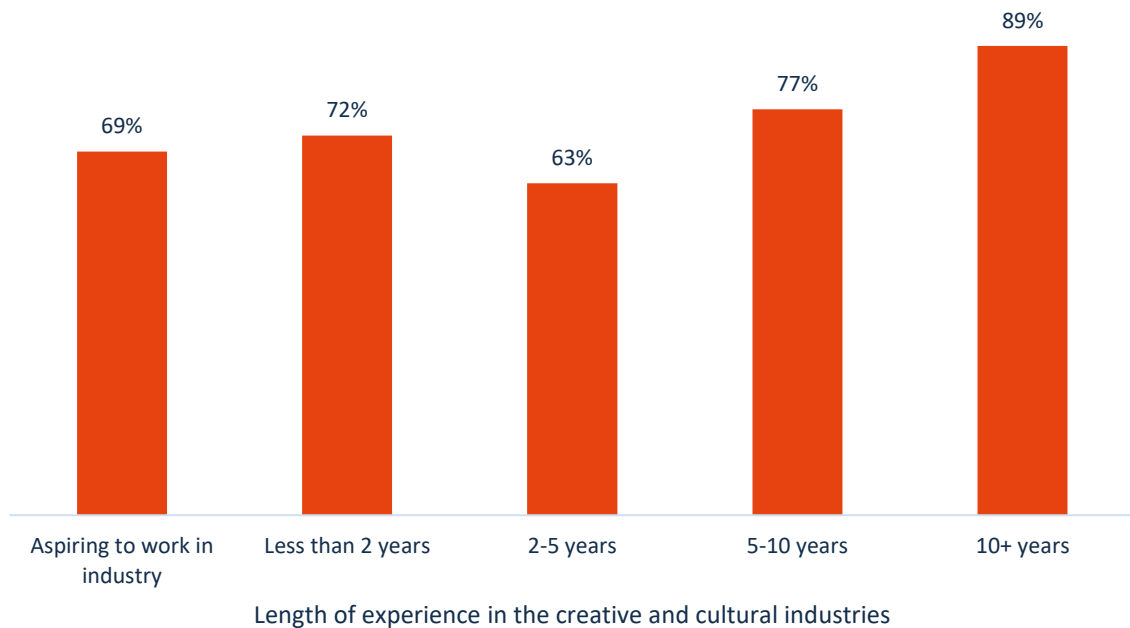
A majority (60%) of ethnically diverse respondents expressed that Covid-19 negatively impacted their income, but an even larger figure (70%) of all ethnically diverse respondents were worried about job security.

Figure 3: Response to statement 'Covid-19 has negatively affected my job security'



When looking at the impact of Covid-19 on job security by years of experience, it was surprising to see that the largest figure (89%) who felt most insecure about their jobs had more than 10 years' experience in the sector. This again raises the alarm on the state of retention of ethnically diverse workers in CCIs.

Figure 4: Respondents who agree that 'Covid-19 has negatively affected my job security' by length of experience in CCIs



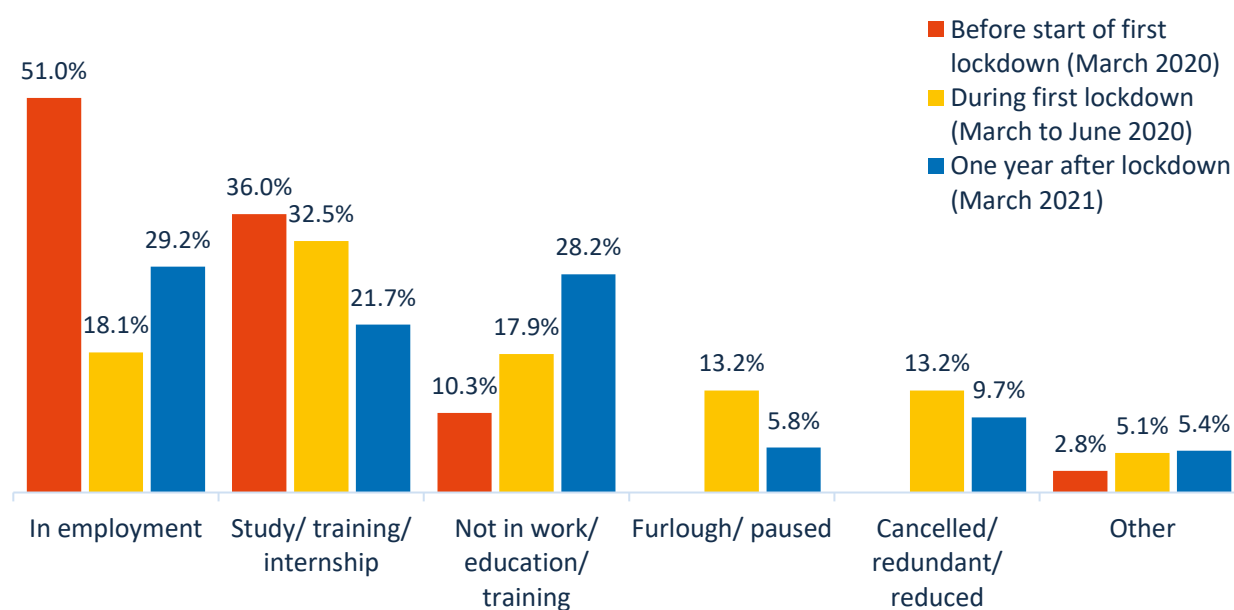
Impact of Covid-19 on employment: retention in and entry to CCIs

The impact of Covid-19 on job losses in the industry is indisputable. Within the six months following the first lockdown in 2020, 30% of workers in the music, performing and visual arts sectors lost their jobs, significantly higher than average numbers of people leaving creative occupations compared to previous years (O’Brien, Taylor and Owen, 2020).^{xii}

Producing a precise picture of job losses in the industry is complex. This is mainly due to the structure of the industry where creatives and cultural workers can be employed on one or more different contract types (e.g., full-time PAYE, Part-time PAYE, flexible zero-hours contract, or self-employed). The survey questions aimed to cover all possible work structures, but in our analysis we combined different categories of work to ‘in employment’. We similarly grouped all those who responded that they are in education, training or internships into one category. Those who declared that their work had been cancelled, or that they were put on furlough or made redundant were grouped into a third category. We pursued this method because we wanted to have a picture of those who lost work regardless of the individual circumstances of their work.

We asked respondents to answer questions pertaining to their work circumstances before Covid-19 and during subsequent lockdowns. There were stark differences between the percentage of ethnically diverse respondents who were in employment before Covid-19 (51%), during the first lockdown between March and July 2020 (18%) and by March 2021 (29%).

Figure 5: Changes in employment and training before, during and one year after the first lockdown of March-July 2020



The percentage of ethnically diverse respondents who reported that they were not in education, employment or training also rose from 10% before the first lockdown in March 2020, to 28% by the time the third lockdown was lifted in July 2021. This is important to note as it is potentially a reflection of those who finished their education during the pandemic, but who were unable to secure jobs in CCIs or elsewhere.

Our survey data shows similar patterns to other research (O’Brien, Taylor and Owen, 2020; Florisson, R. et al) on the impact of Covid-19 and lockdowns on job losses in CCIs. However, the impact of these severe job losses, combined with pre-existing under-representation of ethnically diverse workers in CCIs is a worrying development, and a cause for concern for the future.

Impact of Covid-19 on mental health

The pandemic had a severe negative impact on the mental health of respondents. An overwhelming majority of ethnically diverse respondents reported ‘feeling nervous, anxious or on edge’, ‘not being able to stop or control worrying’, ‘worrying too much about different things’ and ‘having trouble relaxing’.

Figure 6: Respondents who agreed that they 'couldn't stop/control worrying' either 'occasionally' or 'nearly every day' in the preceding two weeks

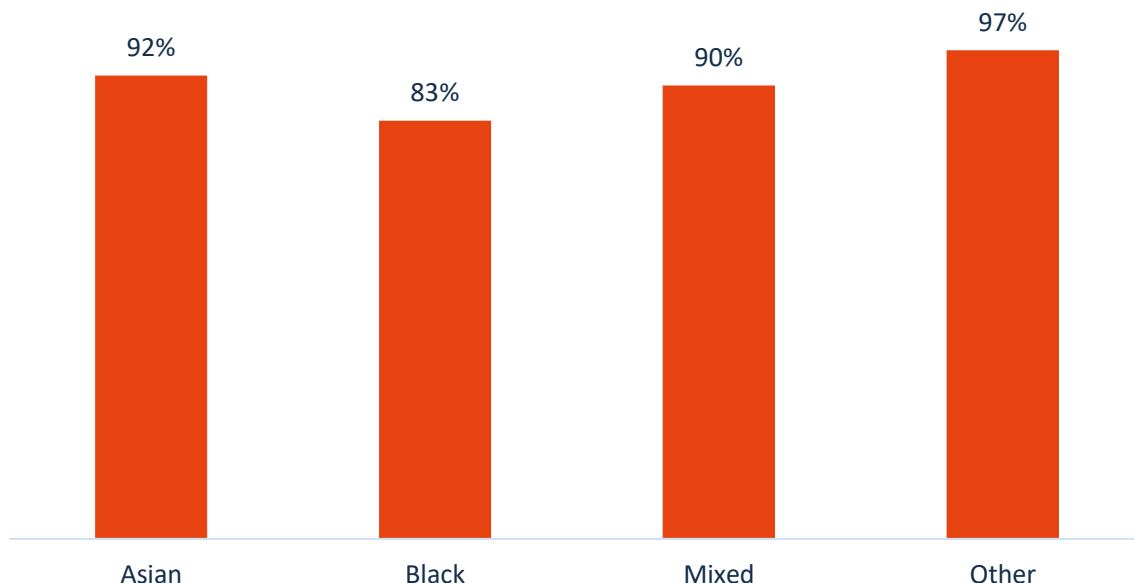
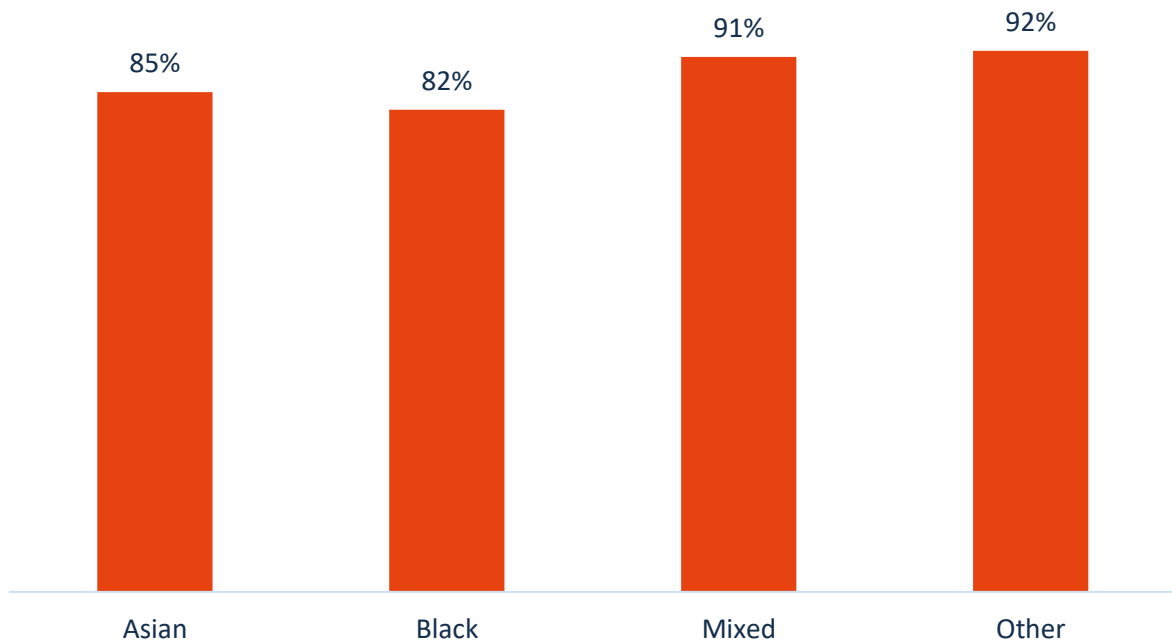


Figure 7: Respondents who had trouble relaxing 'occasionally'/'nearly every day' by ethnic group



The survey included an open response question for respondents to express how the pandemic and lockdown restrictions had impacted them. Mental health was highlighted repeatedly as an area of concern. Although there is not sufficient data to link the dip in mental health to job insecurity and financial difficulty in the sector, we speculate it contributed substantially to the issue. This assumption is supported by responses from ethnically diverse creatives who filled in the open response question:

“I was not receiving income nor was I able to claim SEISS [Self-Employment Income Support Scheme]. I was claiming minimal Universal Credit which was barely enough to cover outgoings. My mental health plummeted from not being able to secure any kind of work within and outside of my industry. Every day got harder to get through as I had little sense of normality and as I was overcome with stress and worry.” (survey respondent)

“Previously, I was in full time employment, with prospects of promotion the following year, and was a member of a basketball club with occasional exercise and walking. Life was challenging, but I felt I had prospects and was on a path. Now I have lost that employment, and have been unable to attend any sports clubs. I am having to get by on freelance work, and I'm trying to work my way properly into the creative sector, (as a writer and whatever else I can do), which could be exciting but is also daunting and very challenging. My finances are now minimal, around a sixth of the income I had previously. I have gained a large amount of weight and my mental health has suffered badly.” (survey respondent)

“I'm a working-class graduate from the North East. I graduated from my MA in January 2020, since that time I was shortlisted for one internship despite applying for hundreds of entry-level roles, internships, traineeships etc. My confidence has been ripped to shreds and I feel like I'll never make it in the creative industry like I always dreamed of. On top of this, I also care for my mum, so my mental health really is at the lowest it's ever been.” (survey respondent)

The impact of Covid, lockdowns and the associated social changes on mental health was also clear from individual interviews conducted with ethnically diverse creatives and cultural workers. There is indication that these will potentially have a long-term impact on mental health and leaving the sector. One interviewee explained:

“I have a lot of dread going back into the industry. I don't know if I want to do it anymore. I don't fully feel like I belong to it. [...] want to be in a workplace with people that value mental health, that value inclusivity. So, I'd rather find a company and do something, do something, I don't know what, but I'm in a bit of no-man's-land at the moment with trying to detail that.” (interviewee)

Both survey and interview responses highlighted the negative impact of Covid-19 and subsequent lockdowns on networking as essential for both work opportunities and mental wellbeing. One of the survey respondents expressed:

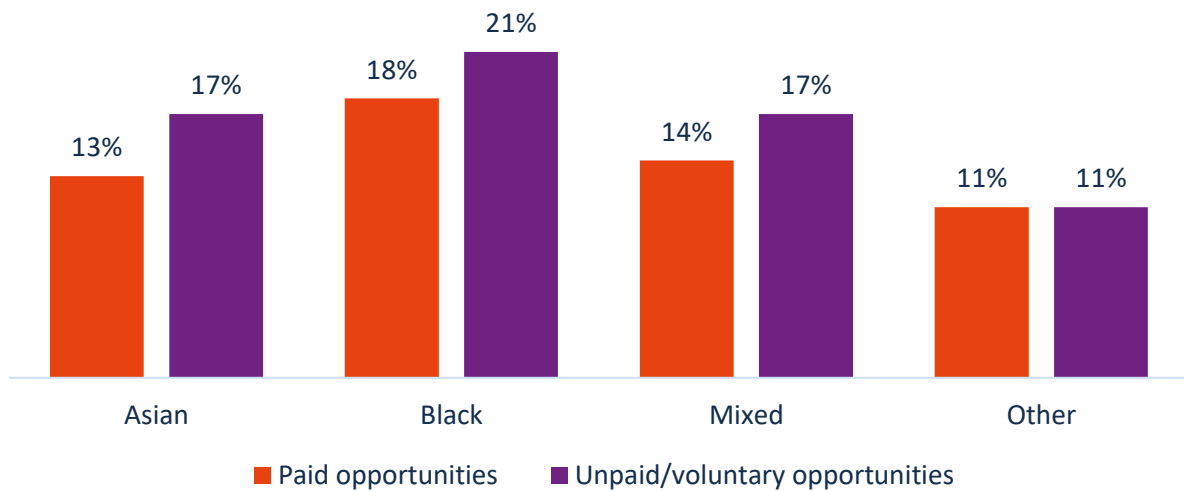
“I had to finish a creative degree from home which was awful. I didn't have a graduate show which very [much] impacted my exposure. I couldn't get a job in the creative sector after graduation, so I had to abandon my career plans and get another job. All the situation has really deteriorated my mental health.” (survey respondent)

Black Lives Matter during Covid-19

The BLM protests of summer 2020 led to calls for more diversity in front of and behind the camera, a flurry of statements in support of BLM and widespread commitment by cultural institutions to increase Black and ethnically diverse representations. Some of our interviewees reported getting more job offers. It was suggested that this rush to diversify the sector may have been 'performative' or a tick box exercise, but interviewees were still grateful for the offers. However, the offered positions remained largely confined to entry level (runners, assistants, etc.).

The survey included questions on whether the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests provided more opportunities (paid or voluntary) in cultural and creative industries. Only 17% of ethnically diverse respondents agreed that more unpaid/voluntary opportunities had become available as a response to BLM and only 14% agreed that more paid opportunities had become available.

Figure 8: Percentage of respondents who agreed they had been offered more opportunities since the Black Lives Matter protests, by ethnic group



Coupled with insights from interviews, the impact of BLM on opportunities for ethnically diverse creative and cultural workers remains unclear and it is too early to make definitive judgements, especially as our interview data suggests that the type of opportunities offered would not be likely to lead to upward mobility or career advancement. There was a general optimism from interviewees for their individual retention and trajectory in the industry, but there was also some pessimism as to whether or not this trend for a more diverse representation in CCIs would last. One of our interviewees said:

‘There are more initiatives. I think white people are starting to become more conscious of what they’re doing. But it can’t be a mechanical thing, and that’s where it’s a problem; it becomes really mechanical. [...] But as we’re going further up, and we’re talking about the good old thing of retaining and also the more authority, the higher the authority I think the harder it is for people to create that change and to keep it. And also I think accountability doesn’t exist yet and that needs to change. [...] I think that there’s more chance of me getting pushed into work, getting positions now, because talent managers now have to be more aware. They can’t just say it, they have to do it, and people are watching them and there’s pressure. But there’s a difference between getting people into the industry, retaining them, and there’s a difference between getting people into the industry and treating them like they’re one of them. There’s a big difference.’

Despite public support for increasing diversity in the sector, including from creative and cultural institutions themselves, many interviewees worried that this would be a trend that would fade in a few months.

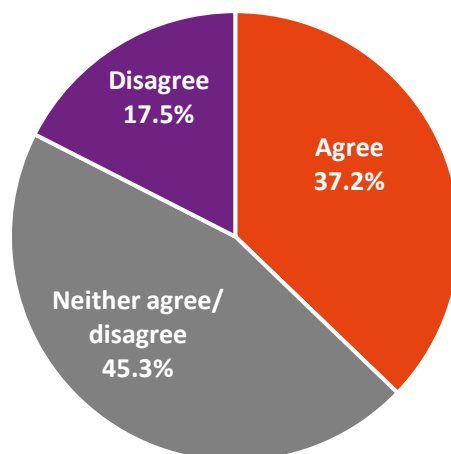
Racial and religious discrimination among ethnically diverse creative workers

Our interviewees were hesitant to name racism as a source of discrimination despite many examples and stories which suggested that they had personally experienced racism at work. Some ethnically diverse interviewees expressed uncertainty about what constitutes racism and struggled with definitions of racism, as a first step to acknowledge and name racist incidents.

Although our interviewees gave examples which suggested experiences of racism, they found it difficult to directly name racism as a reason for why they haven't progressed in the industry. One interviewee gave the example of how they tried to step up multiple times from a runner position on a famous TV documentary show, but found that white runners kept getting those opportunities and getting promoted instead. Our interviewee reported that the executive producer acknowledged the 'unfairness' of the situation when confronted.

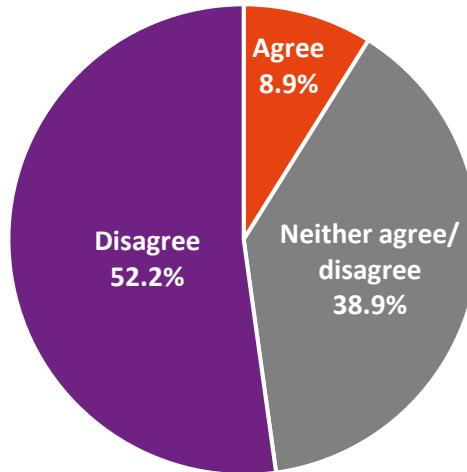
Interviewees were reluctant to directly name or acknowledge racism but rather deflected the discussion to consideration of the personal qualities or characteristics, such as networking ability, that they felt they lacked or did not cultivate (which could be argued as a form of internalised oppression^{xiii}). That is, they would describe their disadvantage in terms of personal deficiencies, whether a lack of a 'social network,' a lack of 'networking skills', 'feeling / being out of place', or 'not being included in the *clique*'. We would consider these outcomes of social inequalities in CCI. Even with this hesitancy to acknowledge racism as seen in the interviews, when asked if their careers in the cultural and creative industries had been affected by discrimination because of their ethnic and racial identity, 37% of all ethnically-diverse survey respondents agreed; 45% neither agreed nor disagreed; only 17% of respondents disagreed.

Figure 9: Responses to the statement 'my career in CCIs has been affected by discrimination I've faced because of my ethnic and racial identity



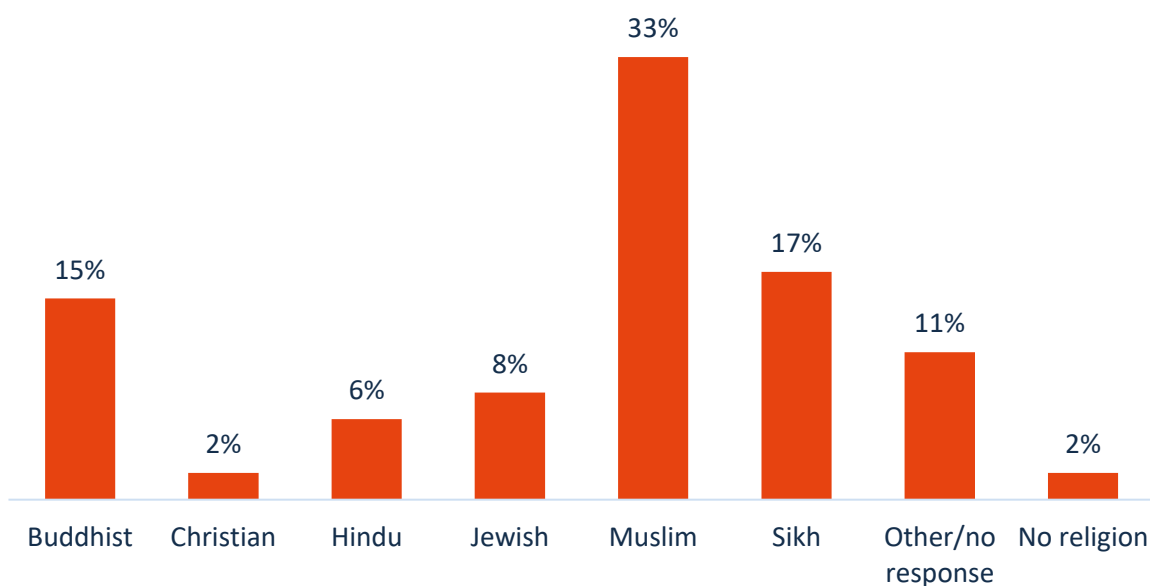
Religious discrimination among ethnically diverse creative workers took a slightly different shape. The majority of ethnically diverse respondents (52%) said that their career was not affected by discrimination on basis of religious identity.

Figure 10: Responses to 'My career in the cultural and creative industries has been affected by the discrimination I've faced because of my religious identity'



However, some religious groups reported much higher rates of discrimination. Looking at *all* respondents (including those identified as white) a third of Muslim respondents, 17% of Sikh respondents, 15% of Buddhist respondents and 8% of Jewish respondents felt that their careers had been affected by religious discrimination (however some of the numbers of respondents in these groups were very small so should be treated with caution).

Figure 11: Respondents agreeing that 'My career in the cultural and creative industries has been affected by the discrimination I've faced because of my religious identity'

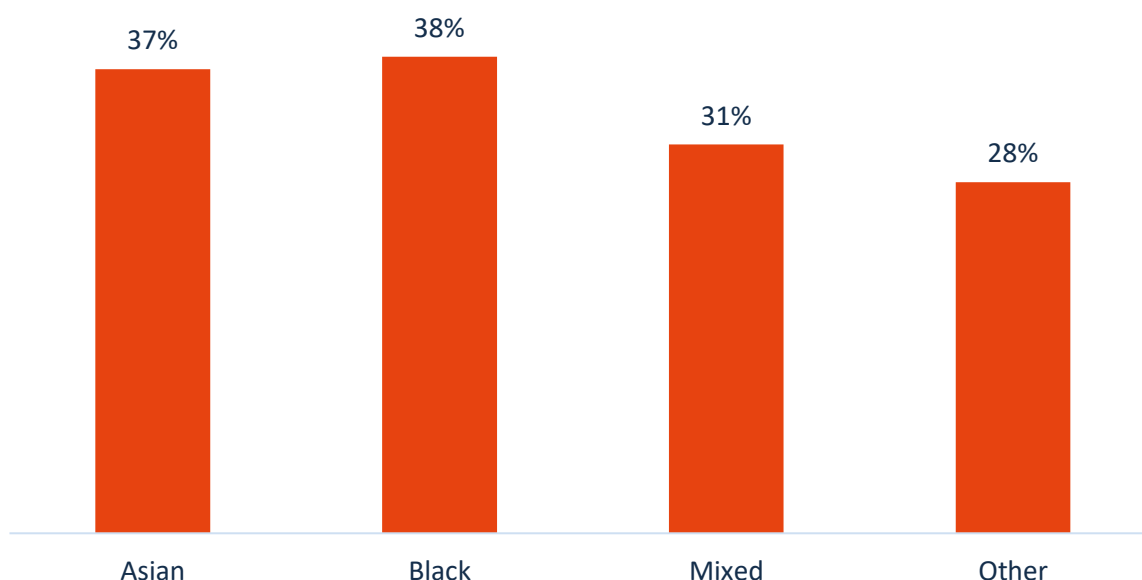


Diversity schemes

One important way in which industries in the cultural and creative sector may seek to improve the representation of under-represented groups is through targeted diversity schemes, which generally take the form of internships and apprenticeships (targeted employment is largely prohibited in the UK). Being a ‘diversity hire’ can carry potential stigma and the schemes only provide temporary and fixed-contract employment.

While most interviewees expressed that they would take advantage of diversity schemes, they still had reservations about the connotations and impact of such schemes. In our survey, only 35% of ethnically diverse respondents said that diversity initiatives had benefitted their career.

Figure 12: Respondents agreeing that ‘Diversity initiatives significantly benefited my career’, by ethnic group



One of the interviewees clearly expresses the problematic connotation that terms such as ‘diversity hire’ conjures:

“Because then I don’t want to be hired as diversity, I want to be hired ...because I’m competent. I want the obstacles to go away but I don’t want to become an icon of any kind.” (30 year old Asian Pakistani, attempting to work in CCI)

Another interviewee explains the problems inherent in diversity schemes, and why they do not always succeed:

“My emphasis is less on how many [on diversity recruits] they’re taking at a time and more on are you offering them or are you giving them the scope to be offered a fulltime job at the end? Because not having that security means my eyes will start straying, or I’ll start looking elsewhere.” (23 year old Black Other, worked in publishing but moved to corporate reporting)

Targeted support services most valued by ethnically diverse workers

Our survey asked respondents to rate how much they valued the support services offered by Creative Access. Of the services provided by Creative Access, ethnically diverse respondents found the following to be most valuable:

Figure 13: Creative Access support services rated as valuable by respondents



Data from our interviews showed that Creative Access users/members found the one-on-one support throughout the process of applying for a job particularly helpful. Creative Access provided feedback to help applicants improve their CVs and applications, and helped members prepare for interviews.

“I really appreciate what Creative Access does, because I think without them, I was really struggling to get into the industry... I think even now, like we said, publishing is so white. Like, I’ve been in [publishing company] it’s just me, like, the one brown person, so yeah, it would be great if there could be a bit more change going into the future. [...]. I feel like people have just been talking about change, like, making positive change, for a long time, but we’ll see. If it’s not just talk, and a bit more action, that would be nice.”

(27 year old Bangladeshi-British, working in publishing)

“But I’m super-aware at the minute that there’s a big desire to employ people that aren’t white in theatre. And that’s great for me as a mixed-race creative. And the fact that there’s an organisation that’s championing that and really getting behind that and deliberately employing people who...or finding opportunities for people who come from those sort of backgrounds, it’s just really helpful to have all that centralised in one place. ‘Cause otherwise you’re digging around the internet for stuff”. (21-year-old mixed race student)

Conclusion

Covid-19 negatively impacted ethnically diverse workers in CCIs by reducing financial and job security. Lockdowns and social restrictions disrupted employment and led to a considerable migration, both within CCIs and also – most worryingly - out of the sector. There are also indications of a ‘lost generation’ of new graduates and ethnically diverse people who were aiming to join CCIs before the pandemic who are now finding it difficult to find jobs in the industry.

This job insecurity was one of the major factors contributing to a significant reduction in mental health. Racism continues to be part of the experience of ethnically diverse workers in CCIs, though how it is acknowledged or challenged (if at all) makes this a complex issue for ethnically diverse workers to negotiate. There is much work to be done to reduce racism in the sector and this burden should not fall on ethnically diverse workers.

The Black Lives Matters protests highlighted the lack of diversity and racial discrimination across the creative and cultural industry. We note the welcome increase in awareness of these issues from employers, and some signs that employers are attempting to reduce discrimination. It is too early to know whether these intentions are having a positive effect.

Diversity schemes are one option for addressing the lack of diversity in the sector, though there are still questions about their long-term efficacy. Targeted support services, such as those provided by Creative Access, had a protective effect against the negative impacts of the pandemic. Creative Access members who took advantage of multiple support services, including mentorships, masterclasses and CV development experienced more success in finding suitable employment than members who only used the job boards.

Problems of racial discrimination and a lack of diversity existed across the creative and cultural industry before the pandemic, and Covid-19 created a moment of crisis which was felt especially sharply by ethnically diverse workers. To go beyond reactive BLM support statements and create long-term change will require significant effort and investment.

ⁱ In light of recent criticisms of the use of the term ‘BAME’ to describe people understood as racial and ethnic minorities, we use the term ‘Black, Asian and ethnically diverse’ as the collective term to refer to those groups, which we shorthand to ‘ethnically diverse’ for the purpose of this report. Where possible we refer to specific groups.

ⁱⁱ See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/gender-pay-gap-reporting>

ⁱⁱⁱ O’Brien, Taylor and Owen (2020) ‘The impact of Covid-19 on jobs in the cultural sector – part 1’, available at: <https://www.culturehive.co.uk/CVlresources/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-jobs-in-the-creative-and-cultural-sectors/>

^{iv} Researchers at CoDE conducted 42 interviews with ethnically diverse and cultural workers, more than 15 interviews were with those who worked in the Film and TV sectors

^v Publishers Association (2020) ‘Publishing in 2020: resilient in the face of Covid’, available at:

<https://www.publishers.org.uk/publishing-in-2020/>

^{vi} Siepel, J., Velez-Ospina, J, Camerani, R., Bloom, M., Masucci, M. and Casadei, P. (2021) Creative Radar 2021: The impact of COVID-19 on the UK’s creative industries. London: Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre and Sussex University. Available from: <https://www.pec.ac.uk/research-reports/creative-radar-2021-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-the-uks-creative-industries>

^{vii} Florisson, R. et al (2020) ‘The impact of Covid-19 on jobs in the cultural sector – part 3’. Available from: <https://www.culturehive.co.uk/CVlresources/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-jobs-in-the-cultural-sector-part-3/>

^{viii} Florisson et.al (2020) ‘The impact of Covid-19 on jobs in the cultural sector – part 3’, available at: <https://www.culturehive.co.uk/CVlresources/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-jobs-in-the-cultural-sector-part-3/>

^{ix} Ibid

^x According to Arts Council, “the total percentage of the NPO workforce with a Black and Minority Ethnic background (BME) is 11%”. See: ACE (2020) ‘Equality, Diversity and the Creative Case: A Data Report, 2018-19’ available at: <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication/equality-diversity-and-creative-case-data-report-2018-19>

^{xi} According to Ofcom, “The proportion of minority ethnic employees in senior management positions showed only a slight increase – from 7% to 8%”. See: Ofcom (2019) ‘Diversity and equal opportunities in television’, available at https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0028/166807/Diversity-in-TV-2019.pdf

^{xii} O’Brien, Taylor and Owen, 2020, ‘The impact of Covid-19 on jobs in the cultural sector – part 1’ <https://www.culturehive.co.uk/CVlresources/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-jobs-in-the-creative-and-cultural-sectors/>

^{xiii} See Graham, J.R., West, L.M., Martinez, J., Roemer, L. (2016) ‘The Mediating Role of Internalized Racism in the Relationship between Racist Experiences and Anxiety Symptoms in a Black American Sample’, *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* 22(3): 369–76. And Pyke, K. (2010) ‘What Is Internalized Racial Oppression and Why Don’t We Study It? Acknowledging Racism’s Hidden Injuries’, *Sociological Perspectives* 53(4): 551–72.