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Understanding Concerns about Community Relations in Calderdale

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# Understanding Concerns about Community Relations in Calderdale

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# 1. Executive Summary

## Research Context

- This study examined attitudes and dispositions towards greater ethnic and religious diversity, as well as community relations more generally, among residents of predominantly white British<sup>1</sup> neighbourhoods. It also examined people's attitudes and responses to anti-minority protest by groups like the English Defence League (EDL) and towards cohesion policy and practices.

## Methodology

- A mixed methods design was used combining a (non-representative) household survey (n=212) in three selected research sites (Illingworth, Sowerby Bridge and Todmorden) with eight key informant interviews (across key institutions) and nine focus group discussions (across age-ranges and localities) with local people.

## Findings

### *Feelings about local area*

- Survey respondents had broadly positive feelings about their local areas, although more mixed views were found amongst the focus groups (especially young people who were more critical). The countryside and friendliness of local people were cited as the best things about living in Calderdale.
- Unemployment, lack of opportunities for younger people, traffic and transport, crime, and education and schools were identified as the main local issues, although there was considerable variation across the sites.
- There were anxieties expressed in focus groups about declining public services along with a sense of being "forgotten" or side-lined by the authorities.
- Very few respondents cited concerns about religious or political extremism. When mentioned these were seen as more of a national than local issue.

### *Civic participation and trust*

- There is some evidence of active civil society groups in all three of the research sites, with some 40% of survey respondents undertaking unpaid help to local groups (in the last 12 months). However, concerns were

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<sup>1</sup>The term "white British" is used in this report to reflect the focus of the report on perceptions and attitudes within this particular demographic. It is relevant to distinguish white populations that identified primarily as British from other white populations, notably Eastern European.



expressed about maintaining such civil society activity, especially in the less affluent white areas.

- Community structures in less affluent white neighbourhoods were described as being less formalised, more local and probably less integrated into larger political structures and therefore more reliant upon community-based professionals than they are either in more affluent white neighbourhoods or in predominantly Asian heritage communities, the latter of which were seen by respondents as enjoying more organised community mobilization, communication and leadership structures.
- Political engagement (measured by voting) was lower amongst survey respondents (60%) than the national average (65.1%). More than 1 in 4 (27%) of survey respondents said there was no political party who they felt represented their views.
- Survey respondents expressed particularly low levels of trust in the national government, and whilst local government enjoyed more trust, the mean score was below 5 (out of 10). Trust in the Police was higher (7 out of 10), and trust in neighbours higher still (8 out of 10). This might indicate a fairly cohesive community, although residential clustering on ethnic lines needs to be borne in mind.

#### *Contact and integration*

- The survey data and qualitative data point to broadly positive attitudes towards contact and community integration, and Calderdale being a place where people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds get on. There is strong support for diversity in Calderdale and for integration. However there are important nuances to this data, not least a minority of detractors who are sceptical about and sometimes overtly resistant to greater contact and integration.
- A superficial conviviality was often observed with regards to mixing between ethnic groups, with contact being limited to specific places where people “rub along”. This was rarely attributed to racism, more to a perceived preference for the comfort and familiarity of one's own shared cultural and ethnic identity, the dispersed geography and residential clustering that was seen to make mixing more difficult, and limited opportunities for inter-ethnic/religious group mixing during the course of people's everyday lives.
- Key informants and focus groups were able to recount instances of community tensions flaring up, but often these concerned overlapping issues of territorial rivalries (particularly among young people) as much as racial or religious hostilities. There is also a perception of possible emerging tensions between Asian heritage and Eastern European communities.
- Some respondents thought that people from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities should make more of an explicit effort to integrate, although this was generally tempered by a view that people from Asian heritage communities did not engage more with white communities because they were in many ways self-sufficient and therefore did not need

to integrate i.e. it was viewed, at least to some extent, simply as an outcome of decisions about the practicalities of everyday life.

- There were frequent perceptions by focus group respondents of unfairness and preferential treatment by statutory authorities towards people of Asian heritage.
- Schools were seen by many as an important site for cross-community integration and mixing, but these efforts were seen to be often hindered by students' own appetites for socialising within their ethnic groupings.

#### *Attitudes towards anti-minority protest*

- Most (86%) survey respondents had heard of the EDL (primarily through mainstream media) and some 57% had heard of and felt they understood what the EDL stands for.
- There was little declared support for the EDL, and focus group respondents were mostly critical or dismissive of the EDL as an organisation. The EDL's aggressive reputation, the potential for violence, and the spectacle of heavily policed street demonstrations were often cited.
- Nevertheless, a number of EDL themes did resonate with some survey and focus group participants, and these acted as a badge for the expression of more general feelings of unfairness towards, and marginalisation of, people from white British backgrounds.

#### *Attitudes towards "cohesion" activities*

- Whilst there was some support for events that promote across-community contact, there seems to be less appetite for specific cohesion-related activities, moreover, some focus group participants and key informants question what they achieve in the longer term.
- There was broad agreement that it was important that cohesion or integration work should not feel forced or manipulative.
- Some key informants argued that a focus on "community resilience" and on enabling "community development" might be a better starting point for trying to cultivate richer and more positive community relations than an explicit focus on "cohesion".

## 2. Project Background

The University of Huddersfield proposed this research, with its explicit focus on mainly white communities, as a further development of a number of well-established research agendas at the University: on understanding attitudes and dispositions within mainly white communities to ethnic diversity and greater cross-community cohesion (Thomas, 2007; Thomas and Henri, 2011; Thomas and Sanderson, 2013); on anti-minority protests and mobilisation (Busher 2013a; 2013b; Macklin 2015); on hate crime and violent extremism (Christmann 2012; Christmann & Wong, 2010; Hirschfield et al 2012b; Wilcox et al 2010) and on how policy and practice can and does respond to these issues (Thomas, 2011a; 2012).

Yet this research was not only intended to develop better academic understandings but also to produce “impact”, to aid better-informed public policy development and ground-level policy enactment. As such, like much of our research in this area, this study was designed in close collaboration with relevant policy-makers and practitioners. In Calderdale, previous surveys indicate that some people are worried about how people from different ethnic and religious communities get along together. This study provides policy-makers and practitioners in Calderdale with an opportunity to deepen their understanding of the dynamics of these concerns about community relations.

A key focus for this research was a longstanding sense that some predominantly white communities locally and nationally have expressed a sense of “unfairness” alongside ambivalence both to greater ethnic diversity and to policy measures designed to ensure greater equality and cohesion (Beider 2011; Open Society Foundations 2014). Such a sense of white unfairness is not unique to the UK, with similar dispositions identified in other European states, such as the Netherlands (Sniderman and Hagendoorn, 2009). At its heart is a perception that “multiculturalist” policy measures mean preferential treatment for minority ethnic communities at the expense of marginalised white communities, with such racialised grievance central to the 2001 northern riots (Cantle, 2001; Thomas, 2003; 2011a). In conjunction with this there has been a “white backlash” (Hewitt 2005) amongst some white young people, often from poor economic backgrounds, in response to anti-racist educational initiatives in schools and youth work. These measures have had positive impacts amongst many white young people but it must be acknowledged that they have not worked with some young people (Thomas, 2002). The post-2001 riots policy response of “community cohesion”, based on the Cantle report (2001), acknowledged the reality of this sense of grievance and negative backlash in some white areas. It not only moved away from the problematic language of “multiculturalism” but more substantially sought to re-balance policy work towards an emphasis on commonality, cross-

community partnership and greater contact between people of different ethnic, faith and social backgrounds.

However, to date there is only limited evidence of marginalised white communities participating in community cohesion and integration work, or of more positive attitudes to ethnic diversity. Alongside this, the most mono-cultural areas of the country remain white ones, with some white people, particularly in economically marginalised areas, having very little opportunity to meet people of different backgrounds. Here, policy-makers need a better sense of both attitudes within such areas towards great local diversity and cross-community contact, and of the local capacity to participate in cohesion work.

The context for local policy attempts to develop community cohesion and integration work since 2001 has been one of greatly increased immigration from Eastern Europe that has rapidly altered the demographic make-up of some areas. Since 2008 the country has also experienced a very significant economic recession. What has also shaped the current context has been a recent wave of anti-minority, specifically anti-Muslim protest, much of which has centred on the English Defence League (EDL),<sup>2</sup> a social movement group that since 2009 has staged street demonstrations in towns and cities across the UK as well as developing a significant online presence (Copsey 2010). While the EDL and most of its various off-shoots have claimed to comprise peaceful protest groups and have taken a number of measures to 'police' their own demonstrations (Busher 2013a), these events have provided significant public order challenges and have added further stress to community relations. These mobilisations have highlighted the need to better understand how such groups are viewed within the sort of marginalised, mainly white communities that they claim to speak for, and to document how the cohesion and integration agendas are playing out in these communities.

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<sup>2</sup>Some of the most prominent EDL activists have claimed that their protests concern only what they refer to as "Islamic extremists" or "militant Islam", but the rhetoric and chants used by activists on demonstrations and online conversations suggest that such a narrow definition of their protest issues is probably held only by a relatively small minority of people associated with the group.

## 2. Methodology

The project used a mixed methods design, combining survey-based quantitative methods with interview and focus group qualitative methods. This allowed the research team to understand a broad sweep of views on community relations and perceptions of the EDL within predominantly white areas, whilst at the same time undertaking a deeper exploration of the lived experience of local residents.

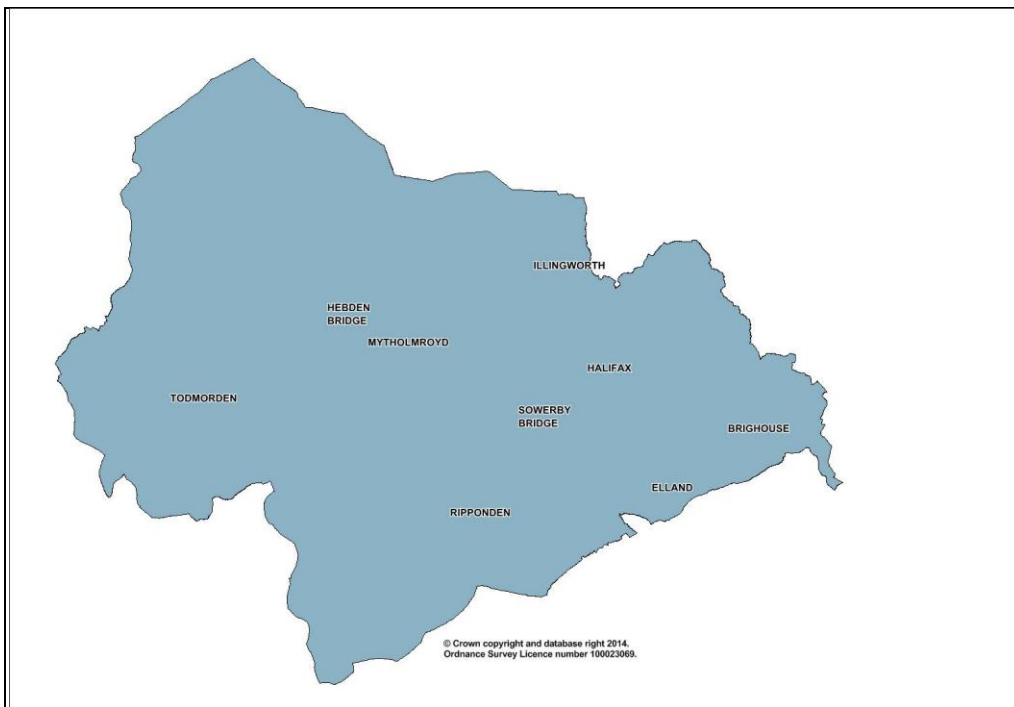
The household survey comprised 31 questions on five main themes:

- What they valued most about their locality and Calderdale as a place to live;
- The main challenges facing people in their locality, in Calderdale and the UK;
- Community relations and integration;
- Civic participation and trust;
- Awareness of and attitudes towards anti-Muslim protest groups like the EDL.

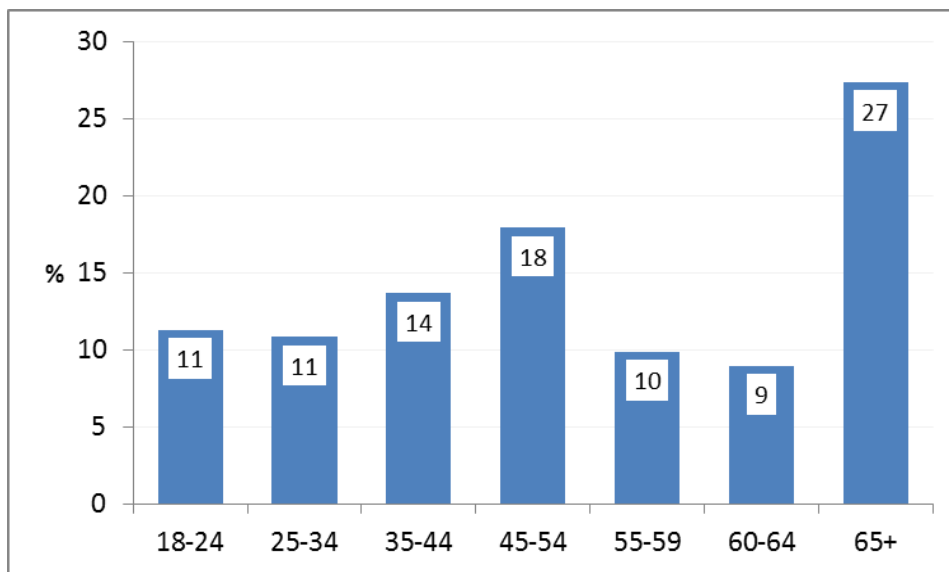
The Calderdale survey sample comprised 212 responses. The same survey was also carried out in neighbouring Kirklees (which had a larger sample = 434 responses), providing an overall sample of 646 responses. The survey was administered face-to-face on people's doorsteps. In Calderdale, it was carried out across three targeted research sites: Illingworth (North Halifax), Sowerby Bridge and Todmorden. The three areas were chosen by the research team in collaboration with Calderdale Council officers in order to provide a range of sites that provided a cross-section of predominantly white British neighbourhoods in Calderdale. Within each of the three areas, a targeted sample was used. Surveys were carried out in the most affluent and least affluent super output areas in order to enable comparison across more and less affluent respondents. Respondents were evenly distributed across the three areas and across the more and less affluent neighbourhoods in each of the areas. It is important to emphasise that this sample is NOT representative of Calderdale as a whole, or of the areas within Calderdale within which the samples were taken.

Across the Calderdale sample, 60% of respondents were female and 40% male. Although a good range of age groups are covered, the 65+ age group is overrepresented (see Figure 2 below). Most of the respondents were long term residents, with half having lived in the area for 20 years or more, 15% between 10-19 years, 18% between 5-9 years, with the smallest numbers being more recent residents (8% between 3-4 years and 7% between 0-2 years). Approximately 70% of working age respondents were in paid work. The majority of respondents, 95% identified themselves as White British.

**Figure 1: Map of Calderdale, West Yorkshire, displaying main towns**



**Figure 2: Age of survey respondents (N=212) (by %)**



The qualitative element of the research comprised eight key informant interviews and nine focus group discussions. Key informants were selected purposively to ensure coverage of each of the three research sites and representation from a range of different institutional stakeholders: the local authority, Police, schools, and civil society groups. The final sample comprised two police officers, one council officer, two public sector community workers, one school governor, and two third sector community workers/activists. Key informants were selected in consultation with the Cohesion lead

officer for Calderdale Council and staff from the Ovenden and Mixenden Initiative.<sup>3</sup> Interviews were semi-structured and focused on four main themes: community organisation and leadership; changing attitudes towards contact and integration with people from other ethnic and religious backgrounds; how cohesion and integration policy interventions have played out; and how, if at all, the emergence of the EDL had affected the situation. It is important to stress, respondents were asked to discuss their own views, experiences and understanding and were not asked to speak on behalf of their respective organisations.

Three focus groups were held in each area (for the purpose of the qualitative component, Illingworth was expanded to the wider North Halifax area and respondents included residents from both Illingworth and Ovenden): one with young people aged approximately 16-20, one with young adults (aged approximately 21-50), and one with older adults (aged 50+). The following topics were discussed: what people valued most about and the major challenges facing people living in their local area and Calderdale; community tensions and how these have changed in recent years; and how they think the activities of groups like the EDL have affected the situation.

All the interviews and focus groups were voice-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Each transcript was read and coded by at least two members of the research team. Initial coding identified themes within each of the five main research topics. Themes were then cross-checked across the research team before integrating the quantitative and qualitative analysis.

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<sup>3</sup> For more information about the Ovenden and Mixenden Initiative, see <http://halifaxnorthandeast.com/about/ovendenmixenden-initiative-and-ne-ward-forum-team/>

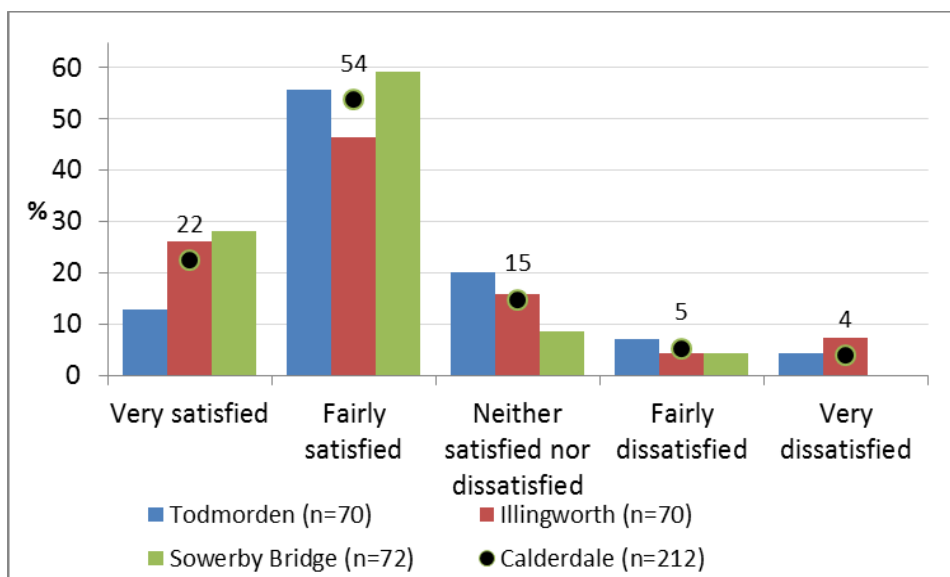
### 3. Findings

The discussion of the findings is based around five main topics: 1) place; 2) civic participation and trust; 3) contact and integration; 4) attitudes towards anti-minority protest; and 5) attitudes towards ‘cohesion’ activities.

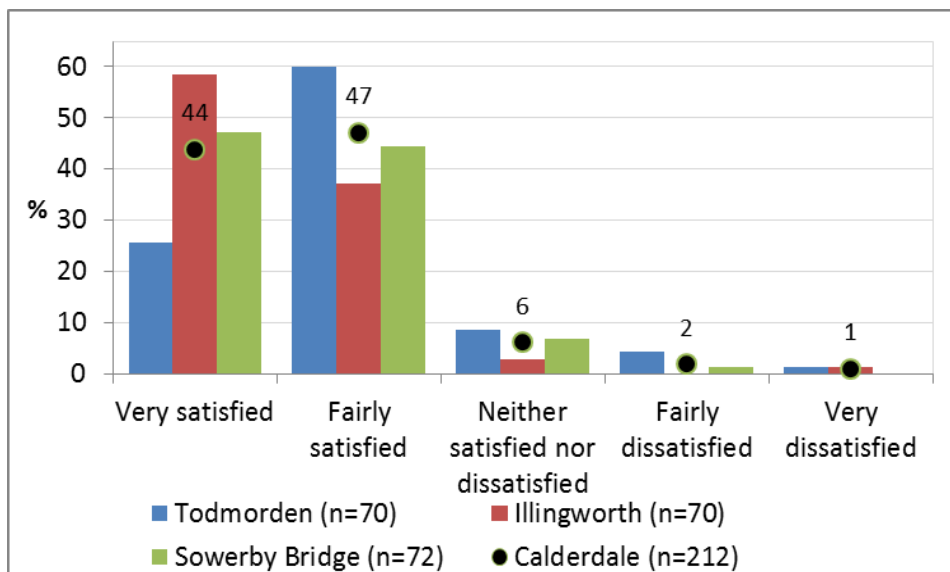
#### 3.1. Place

Participants in the survey expressed broadly positive feelings both about their local areas and about Calderdale in general as a place to live (Figures 3 and 4).

**Figure 3: Survey respondents’ satisfaction with Calderdale as a place to live (N=212) (%)**



**Figure 4: Survey respondents’ satisfaction with their local area (Todmorden, Illingworth or Sowerby Bridge) as a place to live (N=212) (by %)**





Focus group respondents had more mixed views and there were some important generational differences. Young people were generally more critical than seniors, although seniors often expressed anxiety regarding change and the pace of change in the local area.

When talking about Calderdale as a whole, countryside was by far the most prominent theme, although during the survey and the focus groups people also made frequent references to appreciating the people (particularly friendliness), the community, and good transport links (Figure 5 below). This was similar across the three research sites.

Figure 5: Respondents' views of the best things about living in Calderdale (N=212)



When discussing their local areas (Figure 6 below), countryside continued to be a prominent theme, especially in Todmorden – the most rural of the three research sites. Again, friendliness of the local people also featured prominently:

*[...] if you go for a half an hour walk, it turns into an hour and a half walk because everybody just wants to stop and chat, that's where I've met most of my friends, just walking up in the hills, it's lovely. (Young adults, Todmorden)*

Figure 6: Survey respondents' views of the best things about living in their local area (N=212)

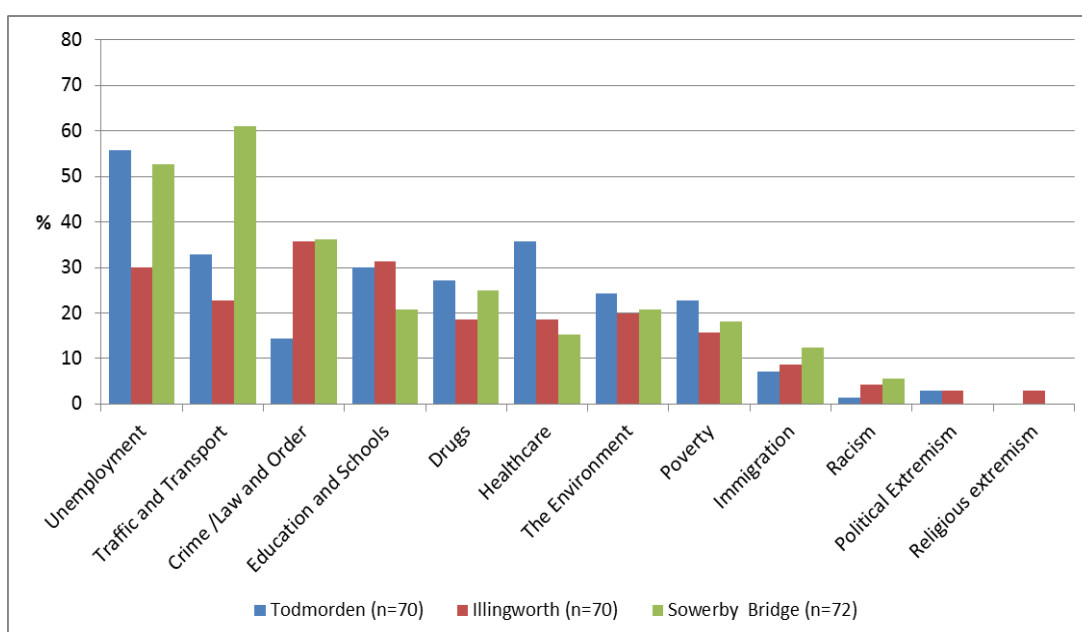


Other themes also came more to the fore and there was greater variation between the three research sites. North Halifax was the only area where schools were heavily emphasised – a pattern that might be linked to the recent building of a new school in

the area. In both North Halifax and Sowerby Bridge, neighbours, community and people were strongly emphasised. The survey data showed no significant difference between responses in more and less affluent neighbourhoods.

The main local problems identified were unemployment, traffic and transport, crime/law and order, and education and schools, although there was considerable variation across the three sites (Figure 7). Traffic and transport were seen as far more of an issue in Sowerby Bridge,<sup>4</sup> than it was in the other two areas, where congestion was described by focus group participants as “horrendous”. Survey respondents considered crime far less of an issue in Todmorden than in the other two sites, and unemployment was considered far less of an issue in North Halifax than in the other two sites.

**Figure 7: Survey respondents’ rating of important issues facing people in the local area (Todmorden, Illingworth or Sowerby Bridge) (N=212)**



Worklessness, poverty, and lack of opportunities (work and leisure) for younger people were prominent themes in the focus groups, although a range of other issues also featured, including loneliness (for older people), access to medical services, reliability of transport, illicit drug use, public drunkenness, and rowdiness from groups of youths. The latter three appear to function as signal crimes where cumulative incidents can be interpreted as a warning signal about security and crimogenic risk (becoming a victim of crime). Young people were generally more critical (at times scathing) of their local

<sup>4</sup>Sowerby Bridge is situated on a busy road and is very much a bottle neck in the valley.

areas, prominent themes being boredom ("nothing happens"), lack of desired food outlets, high transport costs and concern about drugs. A minority also reported experiencing harassment from the police.

What is notable from the focus group data is how few respondents cited concerns about community cohesion prior to being prompted by the research team (which was done in order to explore these issues). With few exceptions, the emphasis was upon wider concerns about standards of living, economic development, the built environment and anxieties about safety/disorder.

When asked about what could be done to improve the lives of people in their areas, responses centred on the issues of activities for young people (Figure 8 below), though it is worth noting that some respondents felt that there was actually quite a lot for people of all ages to do. For example, one participant in the Todmorden young adults' focus group stated:

*I think the community initiatives in Todmorden are just fantastic, and what we have available here. The park and all the playgroups, and the children's centre, and two or three supermarkets, and a market, a swimming pool... a theatre, we play in the local brass band and the orchestra and the choir. I think a lot of teenagers say there isn't much going on, but if they actually could be bothered to join things and join in, there is a lot going on. And there is a youth club as well isn't there? And then there's stuff like Incredible Edible Todmorden, and I just think that you couldn't really do any better in a town this size than we've managed.*

**Figure 8: Survey respondents' views about what could be done to make Calderdale a better place to live (N=212)**



### **3.1.1. Anxieties about declining public services and of being “forgotten”**

There were two more general findings that emerged from the survey and focus group data that require comment. Several participants spoke positively about public services (council services, health services, housing association services and public transport). Concerns were however expressed that services were being withdrawn or centralised.

*The availability of services, that's being eroded, everything is going, it's going elsewhere.... gradually eroded away with – like the personal service and the ability to do things here instead of going to Halifax. (Older adults, Todmorden)*

To some extent, this was described as a product of national political processes such as the rolling out of austerity measures. However, focus group participants also linked these issues to narratives about how the voices of people from their local areas are often either not heard or not listened to by people of influence. A common theme and source of grievance across the focus groups was a perception that within Calderdale, and on a regional level, resources and facilities are increasingly directed to Halifax and to larger conurbations nearby:

Participant 3: *I think Sowerby Bridge has long been forgotten*

Participant 4: *It's like a backwater isn't it.*

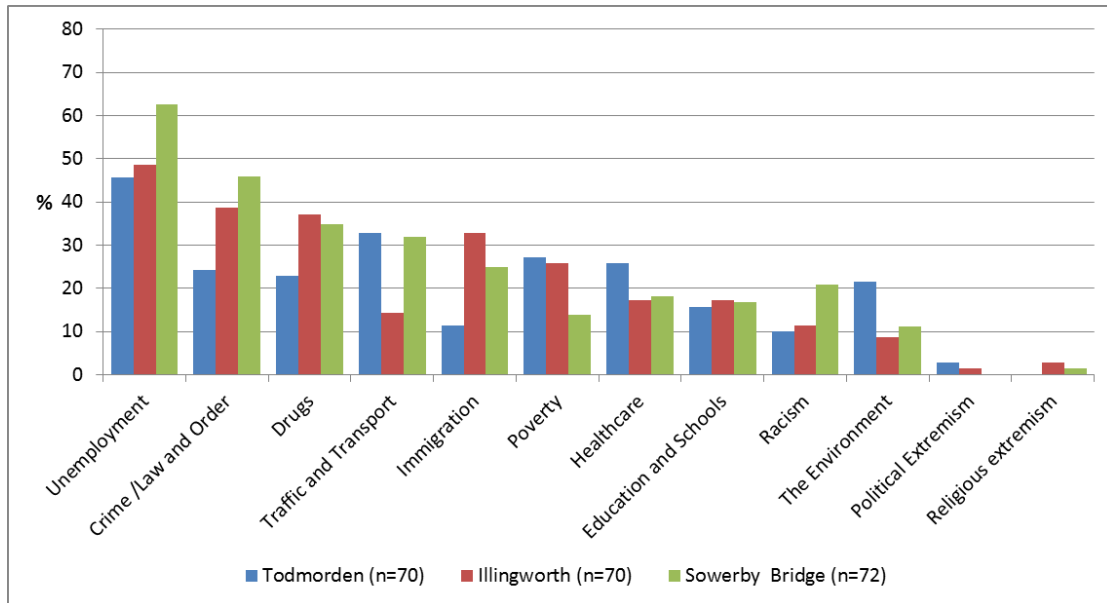
(Older adults, Sowerby Bridge)

This sense of being “forgotten” underpinned and intersected with broader feelings of political, social and economic marginalisation.

### **3.1.2. Local, regional and national issues**

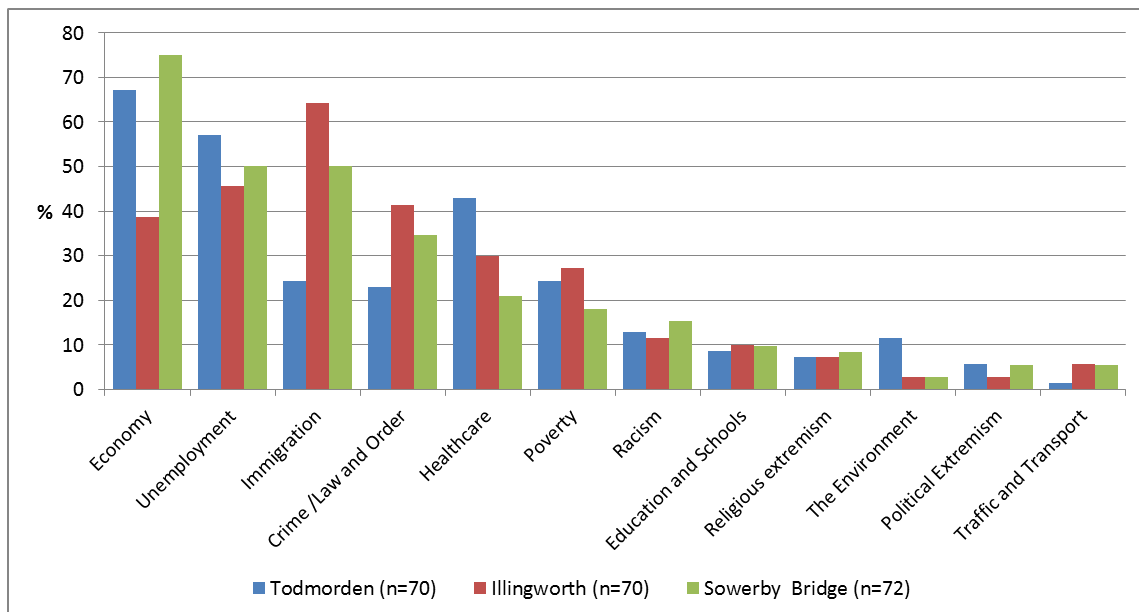
Another important finding concerns how comments about challenges and problems were shaped by scale – by whether respondents were talking about their local areas, about Calderdale or about Britain. Of particular relevance to this report is the way immigration and political or religious extremism were identified as a more significant issue when talking about the national rather than the local scale. When asked about the main issues facing people in their local area, immigration came 9<sup>th</sup> out of 12 options, with only racism, political extremism and religious extremism coming lower (see Figure 7 above). However, when asked about the main issues facing people in Calderdale, concern about immigration rises up to 5<sup>th</sup> (Figure 9 below), and up to 3<sup>rd</sup> when asked about the main issues facing Britain (Figure 10 below).

**Figure 9: Survey respondents' views on the most important issues facing people in Calderdale (N=212) (by %)**



A similar, if not quite so dramatic pattern emerges when looking at concerns about religious or political extremism. When asked about issues for people in their local areas (Figure 9 above) less than 2% of respondents selected political or religious extremism as a problem, however, when asked about the main problems facing the UK, 7.5% of respondents selected religious extremism and 5% selected political extremism (Figure 10 below).

**Figure 10: Survey respondents' views on the most important issues facing people in Britain (N=212) (by %)**



These effects of scale are also borne out in the qualitative data. We can only speculate as to why this is the case. However, one possible explanation would be that while people might be aware of and even to some extent buy into narratives currently prominent in public and media discourse about a “clash of cultures” (see Kundnani, 2014; Adib-Moghaddam, 2011), these aren’t really borne out in people’s own personal experiences. In other words, even where people might be enjoying broadly positive experiences of contact and integration in the course of their everyday lives, their view of those experiences and what they represent can still be coloured by dominant political and media discourse. For example, one focus group participant observed:

*I can think of Asian Muslim families that I know of and you know they have always been straight up hard working families, business owning good family values all of that stuff; only one thing I would say is Islam or certain sects of it have become militarised and they're a problem on a global scale. (Older adults, North Halifax)*

## **3.2. Civic participation and trust**

There is broad agreement in the academic literature that where there is greater civic participation and greater social trust, people are more likely to feel able to manage the challenges faced by them and their communities. In the survey, focus groups and interviews, we discussed two aspects of civic participation: engagement with what we might call “civil society groups” (churches, mosques, community groups and so forth) and engagement with formal political structures.

### **3.2.1. Local civil society and community leadership**

Survey data, focus group discussions and key informant interviews all pointed to the presence of a range of very active civil society groups in each of the three research sites, including faith based groups, neighbourhood committees, community ecology groups, seniors groups, youth groups and parents and toddler groups. Across the Calderdale sample, 40% of survey respondents had offered some form of unpaid help to local groups over the last 12 months, only slightly below recent national (44%) and regional (46%) figures for volunteering (Cabinet Office 2013).<sup>5</sup> Comments about a

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<sup>5</sup>The ‘Community Life Survey’ (CLS) in England provides one measure of volunteering, giving a rough comparator for our survey, although a precise comparison is not available due to differing methodologies and definitions of volunteering. The CLS survey found that nationally, 44% of respondents engaged in “formal volunteering” (giving unpaid help through groups, clubs or

vibrant civil society were particularly prominent during focus groups in Sowerby Bridge and Todmorden. However, key informants and focus group participants also spoke of the challenges in maintaining this kind of civil society activity, which were seen to be particularly acute in less affluent white British communities.

Most key informants and focus group participants were in agreement that white British communities don't have the same degree of organised community mobilization, communication and leadership structures as do Asian heritage communities. This was attributed in part to the organising role of mosques as focal points for community structures within Asian communities, which was contrasted sharply with the declining role of churches in the lives of many white British people:

Participant (male): *Their religion is a lot stronger than ours isn't it.*

Participant (female): *We are losing ours.*

Participant (male): *As we are losing ours you know the mosques are thriving.*  
(Older adults, North Halifax)

The weakening of civil society structures was seen to be particularly the case in less affluent communities, which were described as being denuded of key networks, skills and resources not only by the decline of churches but also by the withdrawal or centralisation of public services, including local authority led community development services and housing offices. In this regard, it is interesting to note that in the survey data people were statistically less likely to be engaged in some form of volunteering in less affluent areas.<sup>6</sup>

More generally, community structures in less affluent white communities were described as being less formalised, more local and less integrated into larger political structures. It was noted by key informants that those playing leadership roles within these communities might be better described as "*key people*" or "*activists*" rather than "*community leaders*". As one key informant observed:

*I think there are people that take a more active role in the community but I don't think they'd want to be associated with being "community leaders". A lot of people in the areas like Mixenden tend to keep to their very small social*

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organisations to benefit other people or the environment at least once in the last 12 months), this figure increased regionally to 46% for Yorkshire and the Humber (Cabinet Office 2013).

<sup>6</sup> Statistically, survey participants were also more likely to have volunteered if they were from Todmorden, female, or aged 35-44 or 60-64

*groups and no one seems to come very much out of those areas, it can be quite, what's the word I'm looking for, it can be quite focused on "all my family live here, all my friends live here and I wouldn't know anyone out of here", but no one puts themselves forward and says 'I'm representative of Mixenden'.*  
(Respondent 4)

Key informants and several focus group participants did make reference to attempts by professionals such as community workers, youth workers and housing officers to support the development of local community structures. While these people were seen as playing an important role – community-based professionals were described as providing a vital and trusted point of contact with local service providers and youth centres and youth services were frequently identified during focus groups as one of the most positive characteristics of local areas – they were rarely seen as being sufficient. One key informant in Todmorden was dismissive of existing structures such as community meetings, seeing them as largely inoperative, or serving local people poorly because, they argued, most local people were either not aware of them or were too intimidated or uncomfortable to speak at them.

### **3.2.2. Political engagement and representation**

In terms of engagement with formal political institutions, 60% of respondents in the Calderdale sample said that they voted in the 2010 general election, slightly below the national average of 65.1%.<sup>7</sup> A higher proportion of respondents living in affluent areas (67%) stated that they had voted compared to respondents in less affluent areas (54%).<sup>8</sup> As can be seen in Figure 11 (below), the most frequent reason given for not voting was that there was “no one to vote for”. Other common responses continue in a similar vein: that politicians are “all the same”, that they “don’t trust politicians”, that there is “no point” or that they have “no interest”.

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<sup>7</sup> [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk\\_politics/election\\_2010/8672976.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/election_2010/8672976.stm) Voter turnout in Halifax constituency was 62.23% and in Calder Valley 67.54%.

<sup>8</sup> This difference was not statistically significant.



Figure 11: Survey respondents' reasons for not voting (N=80)



Further evidence of a disconnection with politics, or perhaps more accurately with politicians and the main political parties, is provided by the fact that, when asked which political party best represented their views (from the list: BNP, Conservative, Green Party, Labour, Liberal Democrats and UKIP) more than 1 in 4 (27%) of survey respondents selected the 'none of the above' option. This finding was equally applicable to respondents living in affluent areas (26%) and respondents in less affluent areas (27%).

Focus group data indicate that disconnection with formal political structures not only manifests in voting behaviour and attitudes towards political parties, but also in limited engagement with local political structures. Although one focus group participant described ward forum meetings as an important place for learning about local issues and services (Older adults, North Halifax), other respondents remained detached from or unfamiliar with local democratic contact points.

*I wouldn't know who to go to in this community, I wouldn't know that. I don't know who the councillor for Tod is.* (Young adults, Todmorden)

One respondent argued that at least part of the blame for this lay with local political activists who were failing to do enough to encourage greater engagement, claiming that part of the relative success of a local extreme right-wing candidate in Todmorden was his willingness to go out and engage with local people:

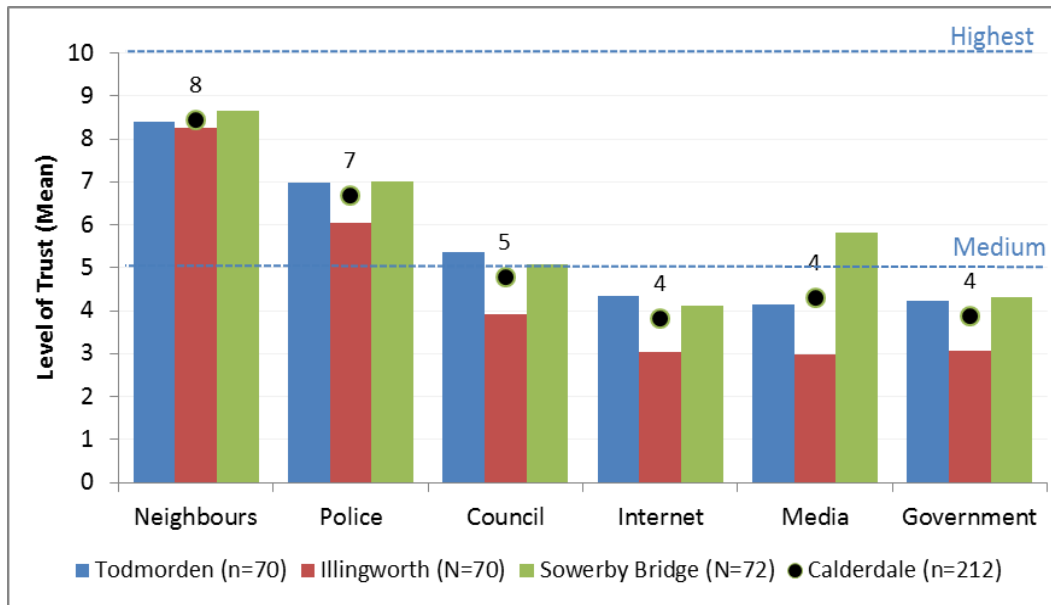
*The reason David [Jones, who has previously stood for British People's Party] has got votes is because he knocks on doors. I can tell you, hand on heart, in the thirteen years that I've lived in this house, no one has ever knocked on my door and asked me to vote, ever. So, imagine what it's like up on the estate. If someone's come and knocked on your door, you're feeling alone, shat on and miserable and some guy says, "ey, I'm on the side of you".* (Respondent 3)

### 3.2.3. Trust

The survey data indicate relatively high levels of trust in one's neighbours (see Figure 12 below), a finding in keeping with comments observed earlier about people's positive feelings towards their neighbours. This general trust provides another indicator of

what we might consider a fairly cohesive community, although residential clustering of ethnic and national settlement patterns needs to be borne in mind. Responses were less positive with regards some of the public authorities. Participants in the survey expressed particularly low levels of trust in the national government, and there was nothing in the focus group discussions that contradicts this finding.

**Figure 12 : Survey respondents' (by neighbourhood) level of trust in neighbours and public institutions (1 lowest, 10 highest, N=212)**



Whilst local government enjoys more trust than do national government, the mean score still sits below 5 and as such is far from a ringing endorsement. The Police enjoy a relatively higher level of trust, a finding which broadly mirrors findings from policing research more generally (see HMIC 2012; 2011; Jackson et al, 2014) and previous local surveys.<sup>9</sup> Within the focus groups one group of young people alleged repeated harassment from the police and what they described as unfair treatment, and one police officer observed that a tendency within some less affluent neighbourhoods to attempt to sort some problems out “internally” rather than engaging with the Police also probably, in part, reflected limited trust. However, concerns about harassment were not raised in other focus groups. The comments of one community worker suggest one explanation as to why trust in the Police is so much higher than it is in

<sup>9</sup> Although trust in the police nationally has recently started to waiver due to a host of high profile scandals

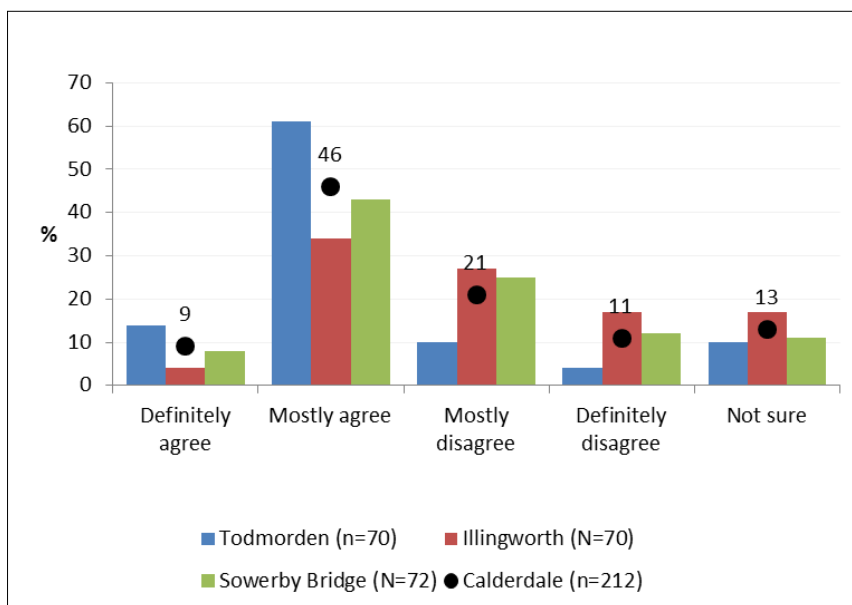
other public authorities: that as other services retreat, the Police are increasingly playing a positive role in front line services within these communities:

*I think the police, more and more, are social workers to the poor... the Police are understanding, kind, they really understand about poverty. They really do. They see the isolation. I think they are a great point of contact. (Respondent 3)*

### 3.3. Contact and integration

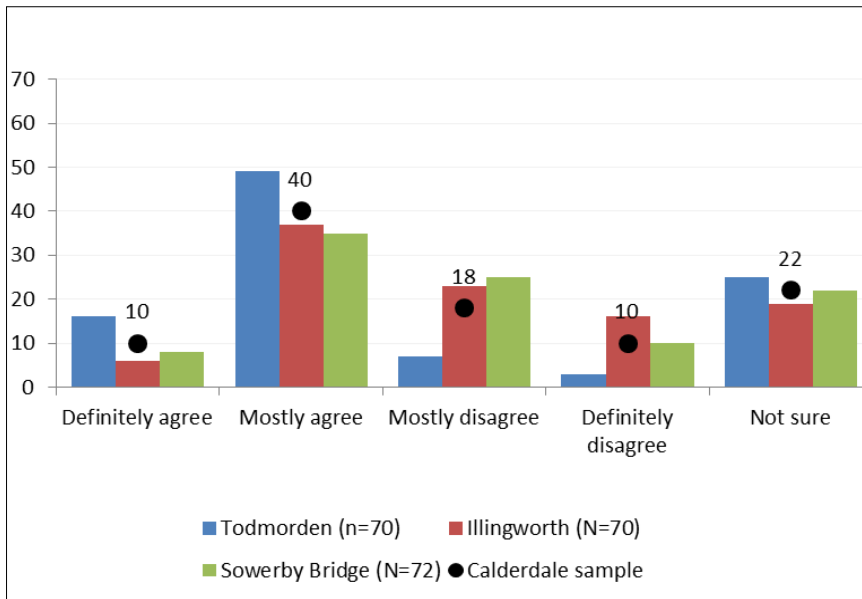
As might be expected, a rather complicated picture emerges from the data on questions about contact and integration. The survey data indicate broadly, although far from entirely, positive attitudes towards contact and integration. More than half (55%) of respondents overall agreed either definitely or mostly that Calderdale is a place where people from different ethnic<sup>10</sup> backgrounds get on, while 32% disagreed either mostly or definitely (Figure 13 below). Halfagreed either definitely or mostly that Calderdale is a place where people from different religious backgrounds get on, whilst over a quarter(28%) disagreed either mostly or strongly (Figure 14 below). In both cases, however, interpretation of these data is problematized by the large number of “not sure” responses (135 and 22% respectively).

**Figure 13: Survey respondents' (by neighbourhood) views on whether Calderdale is a place where people from different ethnic backgrounds get on well together (N=212)**



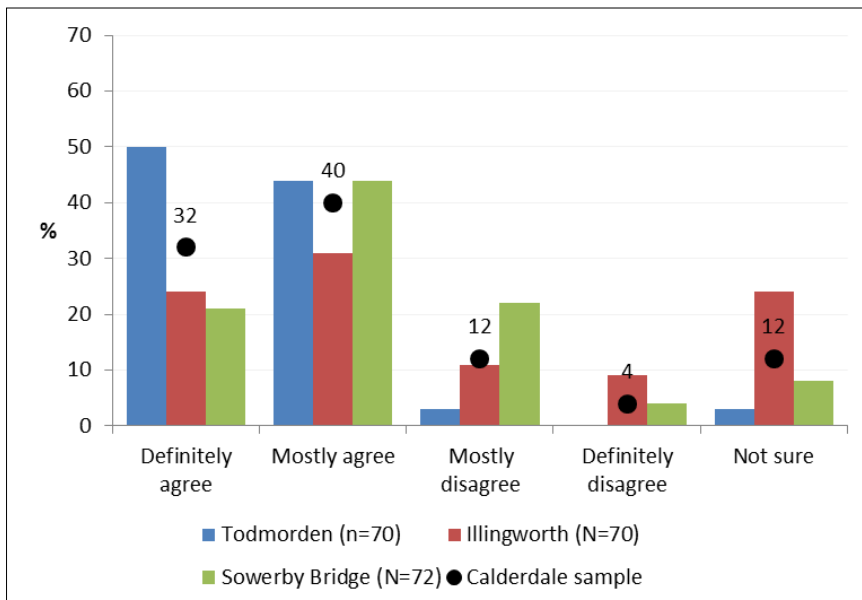
<sup>10</sup> Respondents were asked about their attitudes towards mixing and integration both with regards to ethnic and religious groupings in order to examine the extent to which people did make a distinction between the two issues.

**Figure 14: Survey respondents' (by neighbourhood) views on whether Calderdale is a place where people from different *religious* backgrounds get on well together (N=212)**

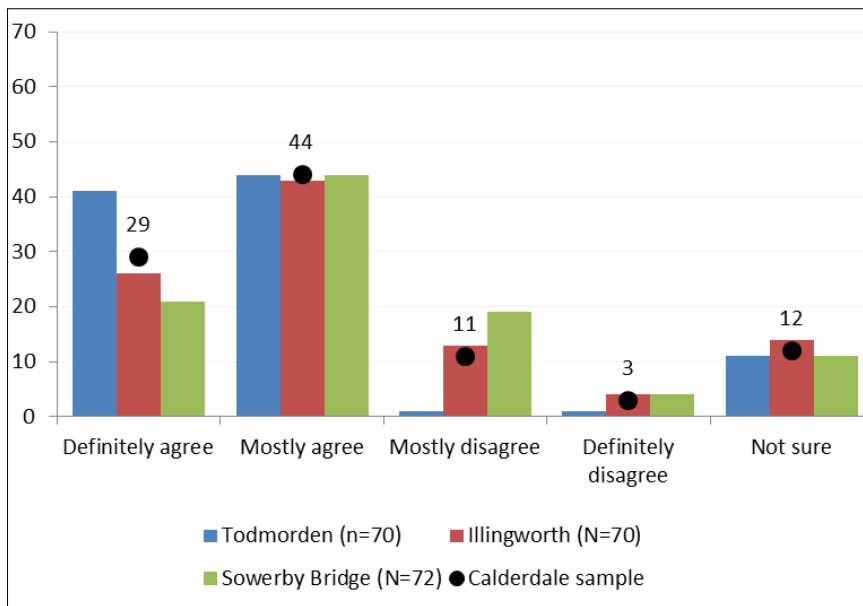


There is far stronger agreement (72% definitely or mostly agree) that it is good that there are people from different ethnic backgrounds living in Calderdale (Figure 15 below), and 73% that it is good that there are people from different religious backgrounds living in Calderdale (Figure 16 below).

**Figure 15: Survey respondents' (by neighbourhood) views on whether it is good that there are people from different *ethnic backgrounds* living in Calderdale (N=212)**

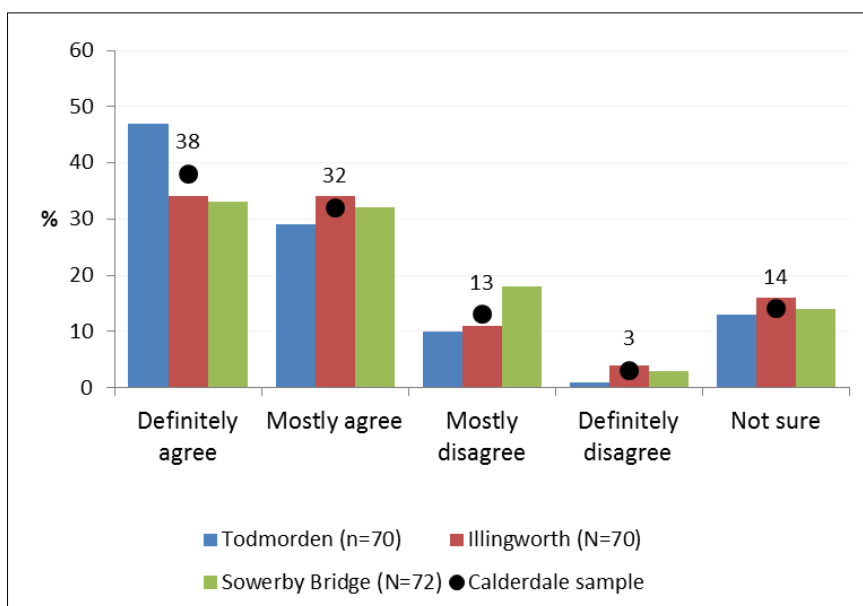


**Figure 16: Survey respondents' (by neighbourhood) views on whether it is good that there are people from different *religious backgrounds* living in Calderdale (N=212)**

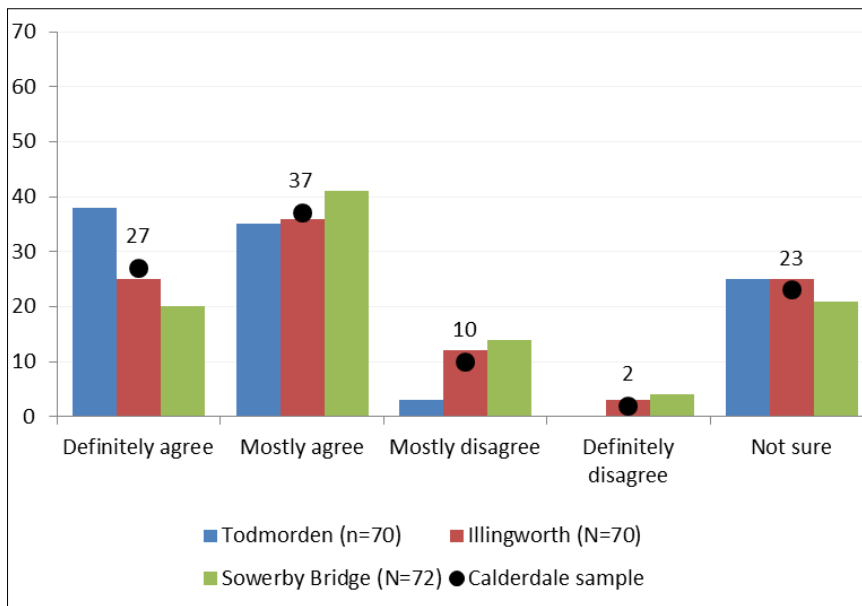


There was also strong support for statements about greater integration. Just 16% stated that they did not agree (either mostly or definitely) that there should be more contact between people from different ethnic backgrounds (Figure 17 below), only 12% did not agree that there should be more contact between people from different religious backgrounds (Figure 18 below), and 57% agreed (either mostly or strongly) that people are able to come together around common values (Figure 19 below).

**Figure 17: Survey Respondents' (by neighbourhood) views on whether there should be more contact between people from different *ethnic backgrounds* in Calderdale (N=212)**



**Figure 18: Survey respondents' (by neighbourhood) views on whether there should be more contact between people from different *religious backgrounds* in Calderdale (N=212)**



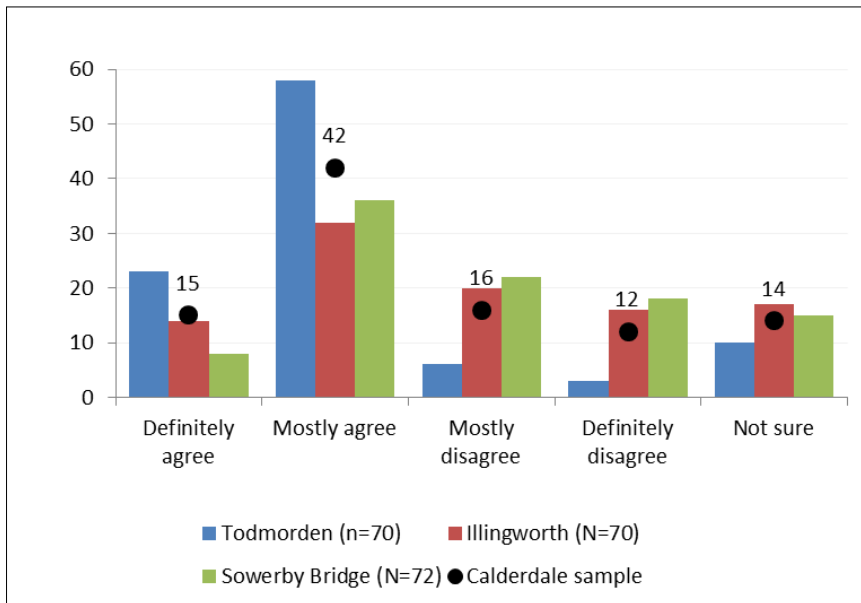
Once again however, while there is a clear majority view in favour of greater contact, it is important not to overlook those respondents who indicated that they were “not sure” about the need for greater contact, a group who constituted almost a quarter of respondents. In other words, there is a sizeable minority who, at the least, do not endorse integration and cohesion messages. However, those who “definitely disagreed” with any of the three propositions were very much in a minority.

Across this section of the survey there was a tendency for a slightly larger proportion of respondents to answer “not sure” to questions about different religious backgrounds when compared to related questions regarding different ethnic backgrounds. This difference was statistically significant for the pair of questions asking whether people from different backgrounds get on well together, and the pair of questions asking whether there should be more contact between people from different backgrounds<sup>11</sup> but not for the pair of questions asking whether it is good that there are people from different backgrounds living in Calderdale.

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<sup>11</sup>Chi Square  $p < 0.05$

**Figure 19: Survey Respondents' (by neighbourhood) views on whether “even though there are people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds in Calderdale, we are able to come together around a set of common values”. (N=212)**



The survey findings are largely supported by the qualitative data. Most focus group participants and key informants expressed the view that people in Calderdale from different ethnic or religious backgrounds generally “rub along”. There were however a number of nuances that require further explanation.

### 3.3.1 Superficial conviviality

Although focus group participants and key informants spoke about how people “rub along”, scepticism was expressed about the extent to which contact and mixing goes beyond fairly superficial contact, and several research participants described a generalised suspicion of and reluctance to mix with different ethnic groups and incoming nationalities outside of a few defined social contexts (the workplace, restaurants, the central shopping area in Halifax, cinemas and taxis). As one key informant explained:

*Sometimes you might think that the only time a white person would see an Asian person, round here people often say “oh you wanna get a taxi” and jobs and going into shops and takeaways. Otherwise, sometimes, they wouldn’t ever come across each other. (Respondent 4)*

Similarly, a focus group participant described how:

*I have a few friends that are Asian, various, and I get along very well with them. And I’ve learnt a lot from them, but that’s on a one to one basis – I don’t live in*

*their area, they don't live in mine... we don't ignore them, but we don't make a close friend. (Older adults, Sowerby Bridge)*

Some respondents attributed this superficial conviviality to what they described as “xenophobia” or “racism” among some people from white and Asian communities. Others felt that this situation came about “*not necessarily through any conscious effort, [but] through comfort, it's just comfort and familiarity*” (Respondent 2). Other factors identified as barriers to greater contact included language (poor English language skills by some people from Asian or Eastern European backgrounds), the dispersed geography of settlements in the area and well-established daily routines (especially where people shop, where they socialise and where people send their children to school) that were perceived to reinforce the segregation of people's everyday lives. Asian heritage communities in particular were described as having their own resources upon which to draw, including wider extended family networks and shops. However, some respondents also thought Eastern Europeans lived “*very separate lives*” (Respondent 2) for similar reasons.

*They have their own Polish shop even through Morrison's across the road sells Polish food at half the price. They have their own clubs; they do their own thing... I'd say the real problem is not community engagement of the others, the door is open, if they wanted to do it, they'd do it. They don't want to do it. I've been very disappointed with the Polish. (Respondent 3)*

Perceptions of enduring cultural differences and an inclination towards in-group only mixing contributed in some cases to considerable pessimism about the prospects of achieving greater integration. For example, one focus group participant in Sowerby Bridge supported comments she had made about being pessimistic about the prospect of greater integration by describing how attempts at integration that she had been involved with had seemingly faltered.

*I mean I'm a member of [a political party], and we changed our venue for our branch meetings here, simply because there was an Asian lady who wouldn't go in a licensed premises, so we moved our venue for our meetings. But then she just stopped coming to the meetings. And we'd altered everything around her so that she could come to them, but she stopped coming. So we've gone back to where we were, which is the working men's club. [...] Well, why did we bother? (Older adults, Sowerby Bridge)*

### **3.3.2 Community tensions**

As well as expressing doubts about the depth of integration and contact, many of the focus group participants and most of the key informants were also able to recall at least one or two incidents where tensions had flared up between people from white



British and Asian backgrounds. Furthermore, while some participants said that there was little in the way of racial or religious prejudice, or that what racism there was more “casual” than “pronounced” (Young adults, Sowerby Bridge), other respondents described high levels of “entrenched” racism (Respondent 3) and expressed concerns about a tolerance for racist views; that there are some social contexts where when racist views are expressed “no one bats an eyelid” (Respondent 1).

However, it was noted that perceptions of racial or religious difference were only one of several factors such as gender, class, age and territory that shape community relations. For example, there were several comments about how relations between people from white British and Asian backgrounds were also shaped by gender: women from Asian backgrounds were described as being more likely to participate in community cohesion events with their children (Young adults, Sowerby Bridge), but it was observed that in general there were more day-to-day opportunities for mixing with Asian men, usually in the context of the service industries.

As such, it was often difficult to disentangle the causes of tensions when they did arise. For example, one respondent in Sowerby Bridge recalled an incident where a white British family had gone out with baseball bats to confront a group of youths of Asian heritage, but argued that although the issue became racialised, with the two groups insulting one-another using overtly racist language, the cause of the conflict had been, at least on one level, more mundane issues of anti-social behaviour – the young Asian men had taken to gathering next to their house, “leaning against the windowsill, dropping cigarettes, making noise” (Respondent 7).

What is worthy of note is that when initially asked about “community tensions”, most focus groups spoke more about local rivalries with neighbouring towns, villages or estates (e.g. Todmorden versus Hebden Bridge; middle Ovenden and the top or Ovenden and Mixenden (Respondent 1; Respondent 8) or between established residents and newcomers (particularly pronounced in North Halifax and Todmorden) than they did about tensions between people from white and Asian backgrounds. Of course, part of the explanation for this might relate to how focus group participants understood the question, but it would seem also to highlight the importance of not exaggerating the racial or religious nature of community tensions at the expense of other relevant factors.

### **3.3.3 Negative perceptions of “Asians” and Islam, and the issue of unfairness**

Focus group participants and key informants often described what might be seen as positive impressions about people from Asian backgrounds (i.e. being “hard-working”, upholding “family values”). Several focus group participants also spoke of their own

positive experiences of contact with people from Asian backgrounds – often either neighbours or colleagues. For example:

*I found the Asian family I used to live next door to more open to being invited to stuff than the white families that never wanted to mix with us. (Young adults, Sowerby Bridge)*

However, several participants spoke about or expressed more negative and even hostile views about “Islam” and “Asians”. These were often associated either with cultural practices, such as face-covering by some Muslim women, or with perceptions that young men of Asian background were frequent perpetrators of anti-social behaviours. Young focus group participants in Sowerby Bridge and Todmorden associated groups of young Asian men with violence, and some described fears of being attacked if they went to predominantly Asian areas.

In keeping with research in other areas of the UK (such as Beider, 2011), most key informants observed that one of the most persistent and seemingly divisive issues concerns perceptions among some segments of the white population that people of Asian heritage receive preferential treatment from statutory authorities. These perceptions centred on issues of housing – one key informant recalled how, particularly within the context of the recent implementation of the “Bedroom Tax”, she would hear white residents saying things like “*If I was a Pakistani and I had sixteen kids I’d be alright*” (Respondent 2) – and law and order. Respondents from the Police described facing regular allegations from some members of the public about their supposed bias towards people from BME backgrounds. For example, one police officer recalled,

*[...] a white gentleman had crashed into an Asian family in the car and both sets of people had some injuries as a result, [...] we dealt with the Asian family as a matter of priority because they had some young children but he didn’t see that as the reason we’d dealt with them, he said, quite openly, “you’re only dealing with them first because they’re Asian and that’s who you want to protect, you’re not dealing with me and I feel afraid”. We were in a predominantly Asian area and a lot of people had come out onto the street and he said “I feel intimidated and you haven’t come over to me” and he automatically thought straight away that it was because we were going to deal with the Asian family before him because of that but no, the actual priority was because of the children. Once that was explained to him, he mellowed a bit and thought, ok I can see where they are coming from [...] I could probably tell you stories like that all day. (Respondent number not included for the purpose of maintaining confidentiality)*

Focus group participants and some key informants noted that school disciplinary procedures provided a further common focus for narratives about preferential treatment, with repeated claims made about how Asian heritage students were given more lenient treatment because teachers and schools were afraid of being labelled as “racist”. For example, one group of young focus group respondents recalled an incident in which a knife was pulled by an Asian heritage student against a white student. The student was not immediately excluded, apparently provoking considerable local outrage as it was the general belief that a white student who pulled a knife on any other student would have been excluded immediately (Respondent 3). The pupil was subsequently excluded, but this story has become a local symbol of preferential treatment of young Asian people.

Anxieties about and sometimes hostility towards people from Asian backgrounds was also based around perceptions that *“the Asian people stick together so if you have a problem with one of them you have a problem with the whole of them”* (Youth, Todmorden). Such clannish behaviour was raised by young respondents in relation to fears about being the victims of violence and by key informants in relation to fears about how relatively small incidents could escalate into more serious confrontations.

#### **3.3.4. Contact and integration in schools**

Schools were seen by almost all respondents as potentially key sites of cross-community integration and a valuable opportunity for mixing and contact. However, scepticism was expressed, both by some young focus group participants and key informants, over the extent to which this potential is fulfilled, and most respondents and focus groups had stories to share of young people in and around school winding each other up along what were perceived to be the most salient lines of ethnic and religious difference.

Explanations for this scepticism centred in part on perceptions that schools are becoming increasingly segregated along ethnic and religious lines. One key informant ventured:

*The schooling system is not great for mixing people in this area, I mean Halifax High just up the road is 97 percent south Asian students. The students from this area in an Eastern European background all go to Sowerby Bridge school and all the children that would be Mixenden and Illingworth, all go to schools that side of town. There’s very little cross education and even at primary school level, it’s the same thing so that mixing never takes place from a young age which is probably where it would be beneficial. (Respondent 4)*

Scepticism about the extent to which integration was happening in schools was also related to perceptions that even where schools were ethnically mixed, efforts to

promote integration have been hindered by students' own appetites for socialising within their ethnic or national groupings:

*If you go to the schools, you will find that you get your English kids go here, your Asian kids go here, your Czech kids here, they do start from a young age to separate themselves. We tried at school to get some sports activities and get different kids from different communities to play together, and it didn't really work because when they started picking teams they would again start picking the same way. (Respondent 5)*

This self-segregation of students within school was perceived to be further reinforced by the way groups boundaries based on ethnic, national or religious identities often coincided with neighbourhood rivalries. As one respondent explained:

*[...] it's almost like you've got two gangs, so that could happen in any culture in any context, but they tend to be racially different, because of course they're coming down as a group into the school. So to a point your friends out of school and your friends in school may be the same, so we have to work harder at school to try and build the bridges.(Respondent 7)*

### **3.3.5. The social distribution of anti-minority sentiment**

A further prominent theme concerned the distribution of anti-minority or racist sentiment. Although much of the academic and policy literature tends to focus on "white working class communities", the data generated for this research project indicates that anti-minority sentiment and associated community tensions were not especially concentrated in less affluent white neighbourhoods. In the survey data there was no statistically significant difference between respondents in the more and less affluent areas in terms of their attitudes towards mixing and integration. Similarly, one key informant argued that in her experience middle class people could be just as if not "more" prejudiced, providing as an example a description of an episode in which opposition was mobilised in a middle class part of town to plans to enable local Muslims to purchase a small amount of land from the cash-strapped Methodist Church in order to have a Muslim burial ground in the town:

*So now, on a tiny hilltop village, really middle class village here at the top, one of my jobs was<sup>12</sup> to identify land for a Muslim burial ground and somebody leaked that out that I was looking for land and I went for a meeting at the*

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<sup>12</sup>The respondent is talking about a previous professional role.

*church and I was picketed! It was the most frightening experience of my life, about fifty people, articulate, white, middle class people who used every word, other than a racist word, why what we were doing was wrong. "These people will be wailing with their bracelets"! What people? Who? "The people who are burying their dead, they'll be there wailing, all the women will be shaking their bracelets!" What bracelets are these? What kind of people? It was a horrible thing. (Respondent 3)*

Focus group participants and key informants were also keen to emphasise that "racism" and "prejudice" are not just issues within the white British community, but also in the Asian heritage and Eastern European communities. Multiple references were made to the "racism" of some people from Asian backgrounds, often directed towards white British people, and to nascent tensions between some parts of the Asian heritage communities and Eastern European communities.

*We do find in the school that we have, quite often it's the Pakistani community that are the most resentful of the East Europeans. (Respondent 7)*

Another key informant (Respondent 6) spoke of a period several months earlier when tensions had emerged between parts of the Eastern Europeans and Asian heritage communities over the use of a neighbourhood centre in an area that had recently seen a sharp increase in the size of its Eastern European population.

### **3.4. Attitudes towards anti-minority protest**

In Calderdale, as in many parts of the country, there is a history of extreme right wing political parties like the British National Party (BNP) putting up candidates for election, and even, from 2003 onwards, occasionally winning council seats. Though the party currently holds no seats, one key informant noted that individuals connected with the party were still, to some extent, embedded in the local community:

*Well I think around here, there is no BNP at the moment but it used to be quite high area for BNP and they, the key people for the BNP are again key people in the community. They are people that have, I know that in the past they have had like boys' days out and gone off for days football matches. People are aware of them; you know who they are [...]. (Respondent 8)*

At the time of this research however, the BNP was at a particularly low ebb, both nationally and locally. In the 2014 local elections there were no BNP candidates in Calderdale. Explanations for this are likely to be more national than they are local: the implosion of the BNP into internecine fighting after their poor showing at the 2010 general election, and finding their political space squeezed by the anti-European

populism of the UK Independence Party (UKIP) who did field candidates in Calderdale. As such, at the time of this research, the EDL provided the most high profile vehicle for expressing anti-minority sentiment.<sup>13</sup> In the survey and during the focus groups and interviews, participants were asked questions about their attitudes towards and experiences of contact with the EDL.

Most (86%) of the people who completed the survey had heard of the EDL. Of the total sample, 57% had heard of and felt they understood what the EDL stands for, while 29% said they had heard of the EDL but were not sure what the group stood for. People were most likely to have heard about the EDL through mainstream media (75% had heard about them through the television, 52% through a national newspaper and 36% through a local newspaper). However, family and friends (21%) and social media were also important sources of information (17%), and 9% of those who had heard of the EDL stated that they had learned about the group from somebody involved in the EDL. It is also worth noting that awareness of the EDL was highest in Sowerby Bridge, a town where EDL activists have congregated on occasion en route to demonstrations elsewhere in West Yorkshire or East Lancashire.

Those who said they had heard of the EDL were asked to complete a word association exercise. They were given 20 words (with a range of more positive, negative and neutral significations), and asked to select the words they thought most accurately described the EDL. There were three main findings from the combined survey, focus group and key informant interview analysis.

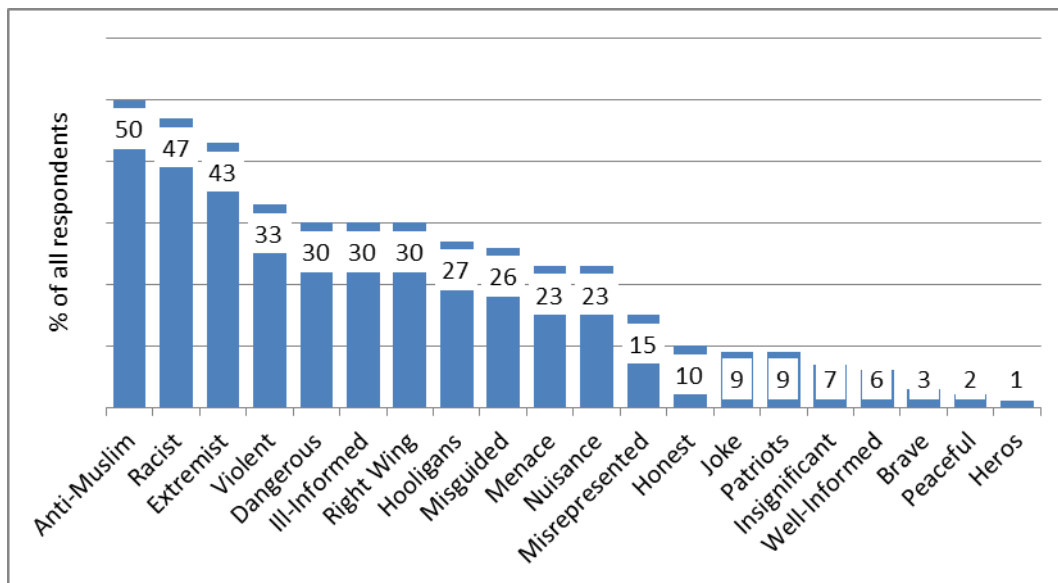
#### ***3.4.1. There was very little support and relatively little sympathy expressed for the EDL***

The overwhelming majority of survey respondents in Calderdale expressed broadly negative feelings towards the EDL. Only 14 survey participants in the Calderdale sample expressed sympathetic views towards the EDL, a little under 8% of those who had heard of the EDL. In general, responses were dominated by words with clear negative significations such as “racist”, “extremist”, “violent”, “dangerous”, or “ill-informed” (Figure 20). The most frequently chosen description of the EDL as ‘anti-Muslim’ was more ambiguous. Most respondents appeared to use it in conjunction with negative words, but some used it in conjunction with more positive words.

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<sup>13</sup> The only significant EDL demonstration to date in Calderdale took place on 9th July 2011, when the EDL was more or less at its peak. The event was attended by 450 activists, of whom it is likely only a relatively small fraction came from the Calderdale area itself.

**Figure20: Words associated with the EDL among Calderdale survey respondents (N=185)**



This finding was supported by the focus group data. Most respondents were critical or dismissive of the EDL as an organisation. Much of this criticism centred on the aggressive reputation of the EDL and the potential for violence which the spectacle of street demonstrations and heavy policing carry:

*[A]s soon as you hear EDL you hear violence riots that what it means to me.  
(Young adults, Todmorden)*

*I think it is quite embarrassing about the way in which EDL go about things , they come across as trouble makers , if they have them views then they should go about it and express them in a different way rather than fit in a stereotype of trouble makers like they do fit with their appearance and things like that they just look like they don't , you don't look at them and think oh you got something important to say behind what you are saying they just , because there are always like police and everything so people associate like with negativity and not politically. (Young adults, North Halifax)*

Other respondents rejected altogether the idea that there was a need for a group like the EDL:

*We don't exactly have that much conflict. We don't exactly see people just fighting all the time, so we don't have any conflict with each other. We don't have any problems so we don't really have to be defended by them. There aren't any problems that we have. (Youth, Halifax North)*

### ***3.4.2. More sympathetic views towards the EDL were associated with low trust and hearing about the EDL through personal networks***

When data for the combined Kirklees and Calderdale sample were analysed together, there were a number of variables that were statistically associated with people being more likely to express more sympathetic views towards the EDL (Figure 21).

With any data of this sort, it is important to emphasise that what it describes is statistical association rather than causality. What we can see however, and what is broadly in keeping with the findings of national survey data on EDL activists (Bartlett & Littler, 2011) more sympathetic attitudes towards the EDL are associated with particularly low levels of trust in public authorities, with being male and with a general dissatisfaction with where they live. Given that engagement with groups like the EDL often takes place through personal networks (Busher, 2015), the finding that greater sympathy with the EDL is positively associated with hearing about the group through friends (either offline or online) and negatively associated with hearing about the group via television is also to be expected. The finding that there is a correlation between self-reported nationality as English rather than, for example, British, is also an interesting one and would appear to correlate with research that points to the creeping racialization and increasingly exclusive rather than inclusive nature of English identity (Thomas, 2011b).



**Figure 21: Variables significantly associated with views sympathetic to the EDL<sup>14</sup>**

Variables associated with views sympathetic to the EDL	Relative Influence	Statistical Significance
18-24		**
65+		**
Male		**
Self reported nationality: English		**
Trust in Police		**
Trust in Government		**
Trust in Council		*
Dissatisfaction with town as a place to live	2.699	*
Heard about the EDL through Friends		*
Heard about the EDL through Social Media		**
Heard about EDL through TV		**
<b>Key</b>		
Statistically negative relationship		
Statistically positive relationship		
Statistically significant (p<0.05)		*

### 3.4.3. Resonances of the EDL narrative, if not the tactics

As described in section 3.3.3, a number of what might be called EDL themes or concerns did resonate with some survey and focus group participants i.e. concerns that their voices were not listened to, that there was preferential treatment of people from BME backgrounds, and that immigration was contributing to change their neighbourhoods in ways with which they were not entirely comfortable. It is worth noting, for example, that 21% said they were highly likely to sign a petition against a new mosque in their area, and 10% quite likely.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, one member of the survey team observed:

<sup>14</sup>The table shows the results of a regression model aiming to understand the characteristics of the minority of respondents in the survey who expressed views sympathetic to the EDL. The analysis uses data from both and Calderdale as across both sub-samples only 71, and within Calderdale only 14 respondents fell into this category. The table only lists variables that were found to be significantly associated with sympathetic views. The relative strength and direction of influence of each variable is shown by the bars in the second column. Blue bars indicate variables that are associated with a greater likelihood of having sympathetic views while red bars are associated with having reduced likelihood, for example the more trust an individual has in the police, the less likely they are to express positive views. It should be noted that although statistically significant associations have been identified, this model would correctly classify 60% of people with sympathetic views but misclassify 40% of this sub-sample.

<sup>15</sup> When the building of new mosques has been opposed elsewhere, it has often been claimed by activists that their opposition stemmed from concerns about things such as parking and the increase in traffic that the mosque would bring. In order to enable us to identify the extent to which such claims

*I hate to admit it but I think there's much more of an undertone, there is a passive, quite a swelling in the way people feel, I think there's quite a lot of bad feeling between different groups and where that comes from [...] So many people that did that survey said, "I don't agree with EDL but I do agree with some of the stuff they're saying". That's almost hammered home and I know a lot of people that would think, "I am the same, I don't agree with the way they go about it but I agree with some of the stuff they are raising as points". Unfortunately, my perception is that there is definitely a growing element of that. Where that goes from here I don't know. (Survey team member)*

However, the data also indicate that while these themes may have some resonance, there is little public support for the kinds of street demonstration associated with groups like the EDL. While a significant minority of survey respondents stated that they were either likely or highly likely to sign a petition against a new mosque in their local area, only 6% and 4% described themselves respectively either as highly likely or quite likely to take part in a protest against a mosque being built in their area. Furthermore, one of the community workers who took part in the research observed that while the EDL's visit to Halifax gave some people a chance to put on show of bravado – several clients had quite publicly told people that they would be taking part in the demonstration – very few people had in the end chosen to participate in the event.

### **3.5. Attitudes towards “cohesion” and “integration” activities**

The final topic concerned people's attitudes towards what might broadly be conceived of as “cohesion work” taking place in Calderdale. While there was some support among focus group respondents for events that promote across-community contact, and in particular for work that focused on younger people, there were a number of critical observations.

While some cohesion events (“fun days” etc.) might provide enjoyable days out, there were questions raised about what they achieve in the longer term.

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might seem a plausible explanation of opposition, we also asked whether people would sign a petition or protest about a new church. Whereas 21% of respondents said they were highly likely to sign a petition against a new mosque, only 5% were highly likely to do so if a new church was being built, and while 6% said they were highly likely to protest if a new mosque was being built, only 1% said that they were highly likely to protest if a new church was being built.

*It'll be a good day, people will come together but they keep themselves to themselves largely and they just don't seem to want to have that interaction. (Respondent 5)*

*While people come together for that, while they're all together, everyone seems to get on and they all talk and interact but after that session it always seems like people just filter back off into their own groups and their own areas and it never seems to bridge the gap. (Respondent 4)*

Several focus group participants and key informants raised concerns that it was always “the same people” attending cohesion events rather than those people who are most hostile to integration – identified in particular as young men.

*[...] but nothing seems to develop. It just seems that it's the same people, they have a meeting, they have a meal and then go their separate ways, and nothing seems to come of it. (Older adults, Sowerby Bridge)*

Furthermore, some participants argued, cohesion interventions could actually be counter-productive if people felt that they were contrived or in some way coercive:

*I think people are generally a little bit suspicious, not just of the other community but of the motive; “Who's trying to integrate us, and why?” So I think there's a bit of scepticism, “What's this about, what are you doing?” I mean I even know that sometimes there's schools that are partnered from a white area into Park Ward, a school there, I don't know of many that have actually done well. Now that seemed to me like a really good idea, and that came from the schools, but I don't think that's worked terribly well. So I think there is a sort of suspicion of social engineering. (Respondent 7)*

One respondent who had themselves been involved in promoting cohesion work argued that, while well-intentioned, at times it felt as though the cohesion agenda had turned into a “*box-ticking exercise*” that puts a premium on the participation of people with an Asian background (Respondent 3). It was also noted that sometimes there seems to be little appetite for specific cohesion-related activities.

*We tried to have safe space conversations where people were listening to white communities, but we couldn't get anyone to come to them, so they didn't work at all. They were a complete waste of time. We did a big children's festival and invited loads of people to come and deliver children's activities, which we now do every year. (Respondent 2)*

### 3.5.1 Successful “cohesion” initiatives

When asked, focus group participants and key informants offered a number of cohesion initiatives that they thought had been quite effective. These included events involving the sharing of food from different cultures, or dancing classes where people had the opportunity to learn dances from other cultures (particularly for young people, notably girls). However, there was broad agreement that the most effective initiatives were often more general projects of what one respondent (3) referred to as “*place-making*”, creating stable, pleasant, mixed residential environments in contrast to what was seen as the current housing ghettos.

Cutting across these comments was also a much broader discussion about the extent to which efforts to achieve “cohesion” were in fact best served by taking this as a starting point for or as a primary focus for interventions. As one key informant explained:

*To start looking at “cohesion” is “the wrong end of the stick. It’s about community resilience, which is about people working together for a common goal, forming relationships and receiving positive results from that. And when a community’s got that going on, the cohesion kind of takes care of itself. It’s when there’s no sense of power or voice that cohesion becomes an issue. That’s my perspective. (Respondent 2)*

Similar views were expressed by other respondents. It is important to be clear, these comments were not about downplaying the importance of striving towards developing more cohesive and integrated communities, but about whether in fact this objective might be best achieved by shifting the focus from “integration” towards ensuring that more general community development initiatives are genuinely inclusive.

## 4. Conclusions and points for consideration

1. A majority of participants expressed broadly positive attitudes towards integration. However, a significant minority were more cautious, anxious and in some cases even hostile. These more negative attitudes centred around a series of core themes:
  - a. Deeply entrenched narratives about “incompatible cultures”
  - b. Beliefs that public authorities are unresponsive to the concerns and interests of “people like us”, which were exacerbated by perceptions of resource allocation biases towards BME and in particular Asian heritage communities

- c. Perceptions of a failure by the authorities to take seriously instances of “anti-white racism”.

This raises a number of questions and challenges for policy makers and practitioners. For example, it would seem to be important to avoid established discourses about local marginality (centralisation of resources and power in Halifax and even Leeds and Bradford) becoming aligned with possible racial and ethnic discourses of unfairness; while so-called myth-busting might serve a purpose, it is likely only to have limited effect in a (national) context where a narrative of incompatible cultures is deeply entrenched; and how can allegations of and narratives about anti-white racism be responded to and dealt with in ways that do not unnecessarily inflame community tensions?

2. It seems there is an appetite for greater across-community contact. There is however suspicion of anything that smacks of top-down or forced integration. “Cohesion” activities, whatever form they might take, are likely therefore to require long-term and consistent, if perhaps relatively low-level, investment, and to require a number of core components including:
  - a. Having difficult conversations in white, Asian heritage and Eastern European communities about how people in their own communities create barriers to greater across-community contact
  - b. Working through strong senses of local territoriality (particularly notable among some young people) that reinforce segregation and the construction of community boundaries
  - c. A focus on how “cohesion” and “integration” can become an integral aspect of rather than an adjunct to everyday life
3. Although there is some public sympathy for a number of the themes around which groups like the EDL have mobilised, there is very little support for the kinds of anti-Muslim street protests that have been carried out by groups like the EDL. Indeed, there is some evidence that the protest tactics of the EDL and the ensuing police response carry particularly high reputational damage for the EDL. The spectacle of aggressive and heavily policed street protests are viewed as both threatening and unwelcome trouble, irrespective of whether violence does in fact erupt.
4. Structural changes to the delivery and funding of public services are having an impact and will continue to have an impact on efforts to cultivate cohesion and integration.

- a. Ground-level professional practitioners, such as community workers, youth workers and housing officers play a pivotal role in the localities included in this research, providing a vital point of trusted contact with the authorities. As the finances of public authorities are reduced, how will such key roles be resourced?
  - b. Calderdale does have strong civil society networks, but they appear to be more fragile in some of the less affluent white communities. In an era when the state has largely turned away from a specific investment in community development interventions, how might civil society networks in these less affluent white communities best be supported and encouraged?
5. There is a clear need for cohesion planning to continue to focus not only on relations between people of white British and Asian/British Asian backgrounds, but also on the evolving dynamic of relations with growing Eastern European and other new immigrant communities.

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