

RACE EQUALITY WEST MIDLANDS

**OPINION OF ETHNIC COMMUNITIES
IN THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH
OF THE 22 OCTOBER DISTURBANCES IN BIRMINGHAM LOZELLS**

REWM RAPID RESEARCH RESPONSE

(Amendments, 8 November 2005 and 9 November 2005)

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Key findings

- When asked whether they believed the story of a serious sexual assault by Asian men on a black girl, a majority of blacks and of Asians said it would reserve judgement until the evidence came to light. Black people were the most likely to say that they did not know whether the story was true or false. White people were the most likely to disbelieve the story outright.
- Asians and white people were more affected by the 22 October disturbances, black people less affected.
- In the period immediately after the Lozells disturbances, a substantial majority in each community – black, Asian and white – continued to believe that Asians and black people get on well together.
- A substantial majority of black and white people supported the action taken by the police, although the Asian community was divided over the way the police handled matters.
- Two thirds of whites and Asians were opposed to the street protests, but a majority of black people believed that they had helped.
- Nearly two thirds of black, Asian and white people disagreed with the action taken by the black community following allegations of a serious sexual assault. The action understood here, however, was not the street protest, but the subsequent outbreak of violence.
- Roughly half of black youth, in contrast to older black people, supported action taken by their community.
- Two thirds of black and white people disagreed with action taken by Asians, although two thirds of Asians agreed with the action taken by their own community.
- These findings are at odds with the perception of Lozells as a neighbourhood hopelessly polarised along racial lines. They show events to have involved a minority of active participants on either side. The prevailing rhetoric of division is belied by the complex reality of daily lived relations in this neighbourhood.

Opinion of ethnic communities in the immediate aftermath of the 22 October disturbances in Birmingham Lozells

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Introduction

How accurately have the press, local community spokespeople, and race relations experts represented local people's views on Birmingham ethnic relations? There appeared to be a contradiction between the generally accepted view prior to the 22nd October disturbances in Lozells district of a multi-ethnic community that had learned to live together, and the picture of 'vicious hostility between the Asian and African-Caribbean communities' drawn by Mark Townsend in *The Observer* (30 October 2005).

In the two weeks after the 22nd October, Race Equality West Midlands fieldworkers undertook a poll of black, Asian, and white people on the Lozells Road. The responses of the three ethnic groups towards the alleged sexual assault, the demonstrations and disturbances, and towards one another, the police, and the council, were recorded, analysed and compared.

As might have been expected, the results of the REWM poll indicate that the people of all ethnic groups express more considered and complex views than those presented in starkly polarised form by the media. Nevertheless, their opinions do vary considerably along ethnic lines. But the situation is far from intractable. There is plenty of common ground and gradation between groups which may allow them to build bridges should they choose to do so.

The first most obvious lesson to emerge from this exercise is of how easy it is to attribute mistakenly the attitudes and behaviour of a minority of vociferous activists to an ethnic minority population as a whole.

If the respondents to this survey are typical of residents of the Lozells area of Birmingham (and there are grounds for thinking they are), then attention should immediately be drawn to the fact that a majority of black, Asian, and white people never accepted the truth of the rumour of a sexual assault by Asians on a black woman, were not involved in protest or violence, thought the police did a good job under the circumstances, and still continue to believe that blacks and Asians living in the area get on well together.

Of course, this is not to say that they think that the area has no problems, but the problems, though real enough and sometimes manifested along racial lines, are conceived, in the main, practically and immediately, as for example, in terms of the restricted economic opportunity in the area, or the criminal activity of drug gangs or of idle young people.

A second lesson to emerge is of the significant difference of viewpoint between individual citizens living in the area and the community leaders and organisations with interests there. Social and political spheres are distinctive, and the political dominates the public discourse relating to the disturbances. In one sense, it does not matter what individual local people think or do. Public opinion makers interpret the world with little reference to underlying realities, and public policy is based mainly on that interpretation. In regard to Lozells, community leaders dramatise and voice their perception of underlying differences and, in so doing, heighten the perception of a starkly polarised situation which needs addressing with new policy initiatives and, of

course, with the allocation of more resources to their respective communities. For this reason, the lessons of this report are unlikely to be welcomed by some local community politicians.

This report has been written hastily in the belief that the findings reported here, if made known, might have a positive bearing on race relations in the area affected by the recent disturbances. While the data no doubt deserved more considered, cautious and qualified handling, REWM staff concluded that, in this unstable context, speed was of the essence. We hope that any mistakes or misinterpretations can be excused.

Information from the survey is presented directly with the minimum of comment or elaboration. The responses of each ethnic group, (1) black, (2) Asian, and (3) white, are presented in turn, followed by a section (4), combining the responses of all three groups, and one (5), drawing out ethnic differences.

A brief account (6) of the demography of Birmingham and Handsworth, and (7), a methodological appendix, are also included.

The ten questions asked by the fieldworkers provide a structure for the sections of the report:

Belief that a serious sexual assault took place.

Are you aware of the recent disturbances in Birmingham?

If yes, how did you first hear about the problems in the area? (Multi-choice.)

How did you first react when you heard the story of the serious sexual assault? (Multi-choice.)

Do you believe that a serious sexual assault took place? (Yes/No/Don't know.)

Impact of the 22 October disturbances

Were you affected in anyway by the disturbances at the weekend? (Yes/No.)

If yes, in what way? (Open.)

Agreement with action taken by black groups

Agreement with action taken by Asian groups

Agreement with action taken by the police

Agreement with action taken by the City Council or councillors

How strongly did you agree or disagree with the action that certain groups in the community took? (Agree/Disagree/Don't know.)

The role of street protests

Do you believe street protests help in any way? (Yes/No.)

Why do you think that? (Open.)

Views on relations between Asian and black people in the Lozells area

Do you agree or disagree that Asians and black people in this area usually get on well together? (Agree/ Disagree/Don't know.)

Why the violence?

Why do you think an allegation of sexual assault was met by such a violent response from young people? (Open.)

How to improve relations between Asians and black people

What if anything can be done to improve relations between Asians and black people in this part of Birmingham? (Open.)

Other points and suggestions

Are there any points which you would like to raise or any suggestions as to changes you would like to see? (Open.)

Section One

Black people's response

1.1 Belief that a serious sexual assault took place.

All black respondents were aware of the October disturbances in Birmingham. A small minority claimed to have learned of them by direct personal involvement. Three fifths had heard by word of mouth, and one third through the media, with younger people (age 25 and under) mentioning radio and television as sources of their information.

Black respondents as a whole claimed to have been either disbelieving or surprised on hearing the story of a serious sexual assault on a young girl. Young people, in particular, reported that they had been upset by it.

Asked directly whether they believed that a serious sexual assault had taken place, two thirds of black people admitted that they did not know whether it had or not, with the rest equally divided between those who believed it had taken place and those who believed it had not. However, one fifth (22%) of young black people (aged 25 and under) believed that an assault had occurred.

PERCENTAGES	25-	26+	ALL
Did take place	22	12	16
Did not take place	17	15	16
Don't know/ no response	61	73	68

1.2 Impact of the 22 October disturbances.

Roughly one quarter of black respondents claimed to have been affected in some way by the disturbances. Three quarters said they had not been affected. More people aged 26 and over claimed to have been affected than younger people.

Respondents who said they were affected reported not being free to leave their houses, witnessing fighting in the streets, being confined within shops, having their trade reduced, having windows smashed, and fearing for their safety. Fear of violence to persons or property was clearly a major consideration.

TABLE 1.2			
BLACK RESPONDENTS WHO CLAIMED TO BE AFFECTED BY THE DISTURBANCES			
PERCENTAGES	25-	26+	ALL
Affected	17	27	23
Not affected	78	69	73
Don't know/ no response	5	4	4

1.3 Agreement with action taken by black groups.

The majority of black respondents (61%) disagreed with the action taken by black groups, with only a third agreeing with it. Among those aged 25 and under (excluding 'don't knows'), however, half of those interviewed agreed with the action taken. While black respondents as a whole were largely against the action taken by their community, half of the younger age group supported it.

In the context of black people's general view that street protests help (see 1.7), the action referred to here with disapproval has to be the subsequent degeneration of peaceful protest into violent confrontation. The majority of black respondents disagreed with the violent action of the black community, not with the original street protest.

TABLE 1.3			
BELIEF THAT A SERIOUS SEXUAL ASSAULT TOOK PLACE (BLACK RESPONDENTS)			
PERCENTAGES	25-	26+	ALL
Agree	44	27	34
Disagree	44	73	61
Don't know/ no response	12	0	5

1.4 Agreement with action taken by Asian groups.

A similar but slightly larger proportion of black respondents (66%) also disagreed with the action taken by Asian groups although, surprisingly perhaps, one third of younger black people agreed with the Asian action. In hindsight, the survey question should have been more precisely formulated, as it is not clear what particular action taken by the Asian community is being referred to. The fieldworkers believed it was the gang violence between black and Asian youths on Saturday 22 October.

TABLE 1.4			
AGREEMENT WITH ACTION OF THE ASIAN COMMUNITY (BLACK RESPONDENTS)			
PERCENTAGES	25-	26+	ALL
Agree	33	16	23
Disagree	50	76	66
Don't know/ no response	17	8	11

1.5 Agreement with the action taken by the police.

By way of contrast with the response to the previous two questions, 57% of black interviewees agreed with the action taken by the police, with just a third (32%) disagreeing. Support for the police was stronger, at nearly two thirds, among the older age group but even among younger people, 44% agreed with police action.

TABLE 1.5			
AGREEMENT WITH ACTION OF THE POLICE (BLACK RESPONDENTS)			
PERCENTAGES	25-	26+	ALL
Agree	44	65	57
Disagree	39	27	32
Don't know/ no response	17	8	11

1.6 Agreement with action taken by the City Council or councillors.

This question was included partly to check the level of differentiation being made by respondents, particularly in regard to the public authorities. Differentiation in response was demonstrated when 78% of black people claimed that they did not know about the action of the City Council or councillors in relation to the disturbance. Fieldworkers also reported critical comments, such as 'what council?' and 'they're frightened to show their face', and 'they're all Asian anyway'.

TABLE 1.6			
AGREEMENT WITH ACTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL/ COUNCILLORS (BLACK RESPONDENTS)			
PERCENTAGES	25-	26+	ALL
Agree	10	12	11
Disagree	0	19	11
Don't know/ no response	90	69	78

1.7 The role of street protests.

A clear majority (59%) of black respondents believed that street protests helped the situation, with slightly more older people (62%) believing in their efficacy. The remaining two fifths of the black population thought that street protests did not help or they did not know.

Black people supported street protests for different reasons, chiefly because they believed they raised awareness and drew attention to the issues, some mentioning in particular the neglect of the current unsatisfactory relationship between the Asian and black communities. There was also a belief that the protests, providing they were peaceful, were an effective way of diffusing anger and tension and of 'letting off steam'. The protest had calmed and pacified people 'through raising their grievances' (B34). The protest had also helped to show to the world 'how women in our community think' (about the alleged sexual assault) (B42).

Those black people who opposed the street protest were sceptical as to whether it had a purpose, or would lead to any satisfactory outcome, or would only provide an excuse for violence. As one respondent put it 'we wanted peace but now it's been made worse by outsiders' (B13). In hindsight, a number of respondents felt that it inflamed the situation and made it worse. (B36, B37, B38, B44).

PERCENTAGES	25-	26+	ALL
Street protests help	56	62	59
Street protests do not help	44	27	34
Don't know/ no response	0	11	7

1.8 Views on relations between Asian and black people in the Lozells area.

Somewhat surprisingly, when asked 'do you agree or disagree that Asians and black people in this area usually get on well together?', a clear majority of black people (57%) said that they did, although two fifths (34%) - two out of every five - disagreed. The majority however, only 'tended to agree' rather than to 'definitely agree'. Another interesting feature of this finding was the distinction between younger black people (twenty-five and under) and older black people (twenty-six and above). Of the younger age group, 72% thought the Asians and black people got on well together, as compared with 46% of the older age group.

Whereas the general perception of the situation is that the conflict is being waged by the young, and the situation is deteriorating, this finding if it is not an aberration, seems to indicate an improvement in inter-ethnic perception of the relationship between the two ethnic groups.

The other possibility, of course, is that the question (which is a modified version of the Home Office Community Cohesion Unit's CCO1 community cohesion indicator, June 2003) is a somewhat ineffective indicator of the level of community cohesion, or that the current prevailing concept of what constitutes cohesion (i.e. absence of ethnic street violence) is inadequate or faulty.

TABLE 1.8			
AGREEMENT THAT ASIANS AND BLACK PEOPLE IN THIS AREA USUALLY GET ON WELL TOGETHER (BLACK RESPONDENTS)			
PERCENTAGES	25-	26+	ALL
Agree	72	46	57
Disagree	17	50	39
Don't know/ no response	11	4	4

1.9 Why the violence?

Respondents were asked to speculate on why an allegation of sexual assault was met by such a violent response. Explanations ranged from the immediate and specific emotional effect of the story of the sexual attack on a young girl to a more enduring and general anger at the way blacks were discriminated against and despised by Asian people.

A number of black people, however, saw events not in racial terms, but as the product of the propensity of young people as a whole - blacks, Asians and White - for excitement, violence, and an excuse to make trouble.

Responses could be classified into three categories: (1) a legitimate response to a horrific attack on a young girl (one third of respondents), (2) a legitimate demonstration against the disrespect shown towards black people by the Asian community (one half of respondents), or (3) illegitimate behaviour by gangs of young people out for trouble and excitement (one sixth of respondents). Against this background, it was also pointed out by some black respondents that the Asians had caused all the trouble because they objected to being accused of the sexual assault.

1.10 How to improve relations between Asians and black people.

This open-ended question produced a limited number of suggestions, which are listed as bullets below. A large number of respondents said they were not sure what, if anything could be done, particularly at this late stage.

- More social equality, fairness of treatment (B32).
- Distribute funds fairly (B31).
- Bring people together to discuss their problems (B2).
- Get a celebrity or star (but not a politician) to talk about unity, e.g. Rio Ferdinand (B36).
- Organise a celebration of togetherness, a rally for equality (B18) (B37).
- Build a community centre where different (ethnic) groups could mix (B6) (B40).

- Do more for black enterprise (B24).
- Provide more work opportunities (B41).
- Get to the bottom of the allegations (B3).
- Christians should pray more (B35).

1.11 Other points and suggestions.

Other suggestions were invited, of which the following are a selection.

- We must feel safe if we are going to live here (B3).
- A stronger community spirit is needed (B14).
- More black councillors are needed (B33).
- We should boycott local (Asian) businesses (B36).
- Celebrate our diversity together (B37).
- More community centres, more community service (B38) (B41).

Section Two

Asian people's response

2.1 Belief that a serious sexual assault took place.

All those interviewed were aware of the recent disturbances. As with the black respondents, a small minority of Asians had heard about the problems in the area by direct personal involvement, nearly three fifths by word of mouth, and just under a third through the media. A larger proportion of Asian young people than of old had heard of the events by word of mouth.

A large proportion of Asian respondents claimed to have responded to the story of the serious sexual assault on a young girl with surprise and disbelief, and a quarter said they had been upset.

Asked directly whether they believed that a serious sexual assault had taken place, half (52%) of Asian respondents said they did not know, and just over two fifths (44%) thought it had not taken place, with only two people (4%) believing that it had. A larger number of younger Asians (25 and under) (48%) did not believe that the sexual assault had occurred.

PERCENTAGES	25-	26+	ALL
Did take place	4	4	4
Did not take place	48	40	44
Don't know/no response	48	56	52

2.2 Impact of the 22 October disturbances

More than half of Asian respondents (52%) claimed to have been affected in some way by the disturbances, with the other half not affected. Of those aged 26 or over, 70% were affected.

Respondents, who said they were affected, reported the following:

- Seeing black gangs fighting Asians.
- A stabbing in a pub.
- Car windows broken.
- Having to close the shop.
- Loss of trade/business being slow.
- Being verbally abused, threatened and intimidated.
- Streets impassable, rioting in their road.
- Noise.

- Fear of attack, womenfolk frightened to go out, high levels of fear affecting young and elderly in particular.
- Being confined to their houses.

TABLE 2.2			
ASIAN RESPONDENTS WHO CLAIMED TO BE AFFECTED BY THE DISTURBANCES			
PERCENTAGES	25-	26+	ALL
Affected	35	70	52
Not affected	65	30	48
Don't know/no response	0	0	0

2.3 Agreement with action taken by black groups

A large majority of Asian respondents (65%) disagreed with the action taken by black people. Nevertheless, as many as 28% overall agreed with black people's action. Asian respondents divided on this issue according to age. More than half of younger Asians (twenty-five and under) actually agreed with the action taken by the black community, whereas 87% of older Asians (twenty-six and over) disagreed with it.

TABLE 2.3			
AGREEMENT WITH ACTION OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY (ASIAN RESPONDENTS)			
PERCENTAGES	25-	26+	ALL
Agree	52	4	28
Disagree	44	87	65
Don't know/no response	4	9	7

2.4 Agreement with action taken by Asian groups.

A sizeable majority of Asian respondents (70%) agreed with the action taken by their own community (whatever that action consisted of). An even larger proportion of younger Asians (90%) agreed with the Asian action.

TABLE 2.4			
AGREEMENT WITH ACTION OF THE ASIAN COMMUNITY (ASIAN RESPONDENTS)			
PERCENTAGES	25-	26+	ALL
Agree	90	48	70
Disagree	5	39	22
Don't know/no response	5	13	8

2.5 Agreement with action taken by the police

The Asian community was not as satisfied with the action of the police as was the black community. Asian respondents were divided, with 43% agreeing with police action, 44% disagreeing, and, with 9% don't know. There was little variation by age, except that more young people admitted to not knowing about, rather than to disagreeing with, police action.

TABLE 2.5			
AGREEMENT WITH ACTION OF THE POLICE (ASIAN RESPONDENTS)			
PERCENTAGES	25-	26+	ALL
Agree	44	43	43
Disagree	39	48	44
Don't know/no response	17	9	13

2.6 Agreement with action taken by the City Council or councillors

Half of Asian respondents disagreed with the action of the City Council and or councillors in relation to the disturbances, although the scope of the survey did not allow us to establish why. By contrast, black and white groups were more likely to say that they did not know about the action of the Council/councillors rather than to disagree with it.

TABLE 2.6			
AGREEMENT WITH ACTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL/COUNCILLORS (ASIAN RESPONDENTS)			
PERCENTAGES	25-	26+	ALL
Agree	35	21	28
Disagree	43	58	50
Don't know/no response	22	21	22

2.7 The role of street protests

Unlike the black population, nearly two thirds (63%) of Asian respondents did not believe that street protests helped in any way, although one third maintained that they did. Even among younger Asians, only 44% were in favour.

Reasons given for not thinking street protests helped were that they usually ended in violence and criminal damage ('it's worse when everyone gets angry together' (A27)), they excited people, raised tensions and made matters worse, they were an excuse for criminal activities, and that in a democratic society there were alternative ways to address grievances, such as talking. Some people pointed out that they weren't against peaceful demonstrations in principle but, in the present context of high feeling, they had the potential to degenerate into violence. Most respondents wanted to make the distinction between peaceful and violent protests.

Those in favour of protests argued that they helped to raise awareness of the issues, gave people a voice and a way of getting their views across, as well as a means of expressing their feelings. Peaceful protests could bring beneficial change (A10).

TABLE 2.7			
BELIEF THAT STREET PROTESTS HELP (ASIAN RESPONDENTS)			
PERCENTAGES	25-	26+	ALL
Street protests help	44	26	35
Street protests don't help	52	74	63
Don't know/no response	4	0	2

2.8 Views on relations between Asian and black people in the Lozells area.

Three fifths (80%) of Asian respondents agreed that Asians and black people in Lozells usually got on well together, an even larger proportion than of black people. Only 10% disagreed with this viewpoint. There was little variation with age, although older Asians were even more positive about race relations in the area. Interestingly, almost the same proportion of young Asians (73%) as of young blacks (72%) felt that Asians and blacks got on well together.

TABLE 2.8			
AGREEMENT THAT ASIANS AND BLACK PEOPLE IN THIS AREA USUALLY GET ON WELL TOGETHER (ASIAN RESPONDENTS)			
PERCENTAGES	25-	26+	ALL
Agree	73	83	80
Disagree	9	13	10
Don't know/no response	18	4	10

2.9 Why the violence?

Asian respondents' explanations for the violent response to the allegations of sexual assault fell into three main categories: (1) an understandable community response to the allegations of the sexual assault on a young girl, (2) an excuse for criminal activity by gangs of young people, and (3), an event created or exacerbated by the media (including pirate radio). The following are examples:

- Because of her age and vulnerability (A5).
- Great opportunity to loot, shoplift, steal, they didn't give a shit about sexual assault (A1).
- Young people have nothing better to do (A35).
- The media deliberately escalated it (A46).

While categories of explanation (1) and (2) are similar to those deployed by the black community, the idea that the Asian community has in some way provoked the violence by showing disrespect to black people is understandably missing, just as the blame ascribed to the black pirate radio station is missing from the black explanation

list. Nevertheless at least two of the Asian responses referred, worryingly, to inter-ethnic rivalry. As one respondent put it directly, the reason for the violence, robbery, burglary, and abuse from black people, was to show to everybody that 'they rule'. There was certainly evidence in the responses we recorded to show some association in Asian minds between blacks, shoplifting, and violence, which might account reciprocally for one of the black explanations for the violence in terms of Asian disrespect for them.

2.10 How to improve relations between Asians and black people.

A small number of Asian respondents were convinced that very little if anything could be done to improve relations. Some suggestions were similar to those offered by black respondents. Examples are offered in bullet form below:

- Address the issues of gangs, drugs, crime and turf wars, and catch criminals (A1) (A24) (A45).
- Put more police onto the streets (A3) (A45).
- Provide better education, jobs and activities for young people (A5) (A8) (A9) (A10).
- Provide community centres/youth facilities that bring Asians and blacks together (A39) (A41) (A44).
- Improve communication between ethnic groups and build bridges (A29) (A30) (A38).
- Deal with the rumour: show it to be true or false.
- Mediation between communities and community leaders (A27) (A28).
- More regeneration and more money and resources for the area (A15) (A34).
- Prevent ghettos forming (A5).

2.11 Other points and suggestions

- Councillors should talk to the people (A16).
- Involve young people in decisions (A24).
- More security cameras (A26) (A28).
- The police just watched: they should do their job (A35).
- Put a nine o'clock curfew on young people (A44).
- Blame the political parties for doing nothing for the area (A46).
- The Bishop should not have encouraged black people to go on the streets (A41).
- Blacks should realise that Asians are going to protect themselves (A36).

Section Three

White people's response

3.1 Belief that a serious sexual assault took place.

All white people interviewed were aware of the disturbances. A small number had learned about them through being personally involved, but the majority (52%) had found out by word of mouth, while two fifths (39%) had heard through the media, with a higher proportion of white young people hearing that way.

Many white people had been fearful and upset when they first heard the story of the serious sexual assault. A higher proportion of younger than of older white people said they were upset.

Most white people either believed that a serious sexual assault did not take place (46%), or claimed that they did not know (44%), with only 10% giving the story credence.

PERCENTAGES	25-	26+	ALL
Did take place	29	0	10
Did not take place	21	60	46
Don't know/no response	50	40	44

3.2 Impact of the 22 October disturbances

More than half of white people (56%) claimed to have been affected in some way by the disturbances, the largest proportion of any ethnic group, with only a third (31%) saying they were not affected.

Respondents reported being affected in the following ways:

- Hearing screaming and shouting.
- Having to stay in and to keep children indoors.
- Shops closed.
- Roads closed.
- Being unable to travel or get access.

Interestingly, many of the white responses described states of mind, such as being frightened, feeling shocked, upset, anxious or depressed, or being worried for elderly relatives living in the area. The frequent reporting of these kinds of psychological response was unique to the white respondents, and puts a different perspective on the meaning of 'affected by the disturbances', which, in the case of the other two ethnic groups, was clearly interpreted in a more material way.

TABLE 3.2			
WHITE RESPONDENTS WHO CLAIMED TO BE AFFECTED BY THE DISTURBANCES			
PERCENTAGES	25-	26+	ALL
Affected	42	64	56
Not affected	29	32	31
Don't know/no response	29	4	13

3.3 Agreement with action taken by black groups

A majority of white people (54%) definitely disagreed and a further 15% tended to disagree with the action taken by black groups, making a total of 69% in disagreement, the highest of all three ethnic categories. A further 21% said they did not know, with only 10% agreeing with the action. A larger number of younger, in contrast to older, whites agreed with the action, but still a much smaller number by comparison than of black or Asian young people.

TABLE 3.3			
AGREEMENT WITH ACTION OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY (WHITE RESPONDENTS)			
PERCENTAGES	25-	26+	ALL
Agree	14	8	10
Disagree	64	72	69
Don't know/no response	22	20	21

3.4 Agreement with action taken by Asian groups

Nearly two thirds of white people (64%) also disagreed with the action taken by the Asian community. Both black and Asian action was met overwhelmingly with white disapproval, with only one in five white people agreeing with it. Young white people were equally disapproving.

TABLE 3.4			
AGREEMENT WITH ACTION OF THE ASIAN COMMUNITY (WHITE RESPONDENTS)			
PERCENTAGES	25-	26+	ALL
Agree	8	24	18
Disagree	64	64	64
Don't know/no response	28	12	18

3.5 Agreement with action taken by the police

By way of contrast, nearly three quarters of whites (72%), young and old equally, agreed with the way the police had handled matters. This was a far higher rating even than that given to the police by the black community.

TABLE 3.5			
AGREEMENT WITH ACTION OF THE POLICE (WHITE RESPONDENTS)			
PERCENTAGES	25-	26+	ALL
Agree	72	72	72
Disagree	21	24	23
Don't know/no response	7	4	5

3.6 Agreement with action taken by the City Council or councillors

Approximately one quarter of white people (23%) agreed with the action taken by the City Council or councillors, while about a fifth (18%) disagreed, with as many as three fifths (59%) feeling themselves unable to comment.

TABLE 3.6			
AGREEMENT WITH ACTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL/COUNCILLORS (WHITE RESPONDENTS)			
PERCENTAGES	25-	26+	ALL
Agree	28	20	23
Disagree	8	24	18
Don't know/no response	64	56	59

3.7 The role of street protests

White people were the least inclined of the three ethnic minorities to believe that street protests helped in any way, with 28% believing them to have a role, but an overwhelming 72% opposed to them.

White respondents felt that street protest did not help, were ineffective, and might make matters worse, causing more trouble and tension and ending in violence. In this particular case, few could see how the protest was likely to achieve any useful outcome. In the end in their opinion, people just had to follow the traditional legal routes (W37).

A minority of white people, however, supported street protest. An organised protest could get a message across (W6), and highlight issues (W31), but it had to be peaceful (W12). It was pointed out that the march in question had consisted only of women and had been peaceful (W32).

TABLE 3.7			
BELIEF THAT STREET PROTESTS HELP (WHITE RESPONDENTS)			
PERCENTAGES	25-	26+	ALL
Street protests help	29	28	28
Street protests don't help	71	72	72
Don't know/no response	0	0	0

3.8 Views on relations between Asian and black people in the Lozells area.

White respondents overall, as with black and Asian, were very much inclined to agree that the Asians and black people of the area got on well together, with 60% agreeing, and 30% disagreeing, although younger whites were divided (43% either way), with a large proportion of don't knows.

TABLE 3.8			
AGREEMENT THAT ASIANS AND BLACK PEOPLE IN THIS AREA USUALLY GET ON WELL TOGETHER (WHITE RESPONDENTS)			
PERCENTAGES	25-	26+	ALL
Agree	43	68	60
Disagree	43	24	30
Don't know/no response	14	8	10

3.9 Why the violence?

Two fifths of white respondents (38%) admitted that they had no idea why the allegation of sexual assault was met by such a violent response. Explanations offered fell into the following categories:

- The alleged sexual assault was horrific by any standards, it was on a young black woman, and thus triggered a violent response.
- Black and Asian people are different in many ways and just do not get on together, for a variety of reasons, for example, because the Asians take over black businesses, and are more successful, thus causing jealousy, or because black people are unemployed, involved in criminal gangs and drugs, and steal from the Asians.
- Young people enjoy and are excited by trouble: the allegation was merely an excuse for starting a riot.

3.10 How to improve relations between Asians and black people

A third of white respondents said they did not know what could be done. Others gave tautological answers, such as 'they just need to get on' (W3), or fatalistic ones, such as 'there is no way back now' (W11), and 'their cultures are different' (W17). Even in

2005, the answer for one white respondent was to 'send them all home' (W8). More positive suggestions included:

- Create more jobs in the inner city (W2).
- Have joint community centres for black and Asian people, instead of separate ones (W10).
- Provide opportunities for people to talk to one another (W12).
- Improve communication between leaders (W30) (W36) as well as between young people (W24).
- More police on the street (W29).

3.11 Other points and suggestions

- Heavier sentences for those convicted (W15).
- Deal with the drugs (W31).
- The media have made matters worse (W32).
- Blacks were annoyed that the Asians were running a shop catering for black people (W33).
- We want people to be happy and get on well together (W1) (W13) (W16) (W39).

Section Four

The overall response.

4.1 Belief that a serious sexual assault took place.

All 129 respondents (black, Asian, and white, considered collectively) knew of events on 22 October. A majority (57%) learned of the problems in the area by word of mouth, one third (33%) through the media, and 6% were personally involved in some way. When they first heard the story of the serious sexual assault, roughly equal proportions were surprised, disbelieving, fearful, or upset.

Of all respondents, 10% believed a serious sexual assault had indeed taken place, 35% believed that the event as recounted had not occurred, while a majority (54%) claimed not to know one way or the other and to have an open mind until presented with the evidence.

TABLE 4.1			
BELIEF THAT A SERIOUS SEXUAL ASSAULT TOOK PLACE (ALL RESPONDENTS)			
PERCENTAGES	25-	26+	ALL
Did take place	16	5	10
Did not take place	37	38	35
Don't know/ no response	53	57	54

4.2 Impact of the 22 October disturbances.

Two out of every five respondents (43%) claimed to have been affected by the disturbances, but in a variety of different ways. Some had been directly affected by having car windows smashed or having to close their shops. Others had stayed indoors for safety or out of fear. Some claimed to have been affected psychologically.

TABLE 4.2			
ALL RESPONDENTS WHO CLAIMED TO BE AFFECTED BY THE DISTURBANCES			
PERCENTAGES	25-	26+	ALL
Affected	31	52	43
Not affected	60	45	51
Don't know/ no response	9	3	6

4.3 Agreement with action taken by black groups

Two thirds (66%) of all respondents disagreed with the action of the black community, one quarter (24%) agreed with it, while 10% had no opinion. A far larger proportion of older people (77%) disagreed with the action of the black community.

TABLE 4.3			
AGREEMENT WITH ACTION OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY (ALL RESPONDENTS)			
PERCENTAGES	25-	26+	ALL
Agree	40	14	24
Disagree	49	77	66
Don't know/ no response	11	9	10

4.4 Agreement with action taken by Asian groups.

Of all respondents, 28% agreed with action taken by Asian groups, and 50%, or exactly half, disagreed.

TABLE 4.4			
AGREEMENT WITH ACTION OF THE ASIAN COMMUNITY (ALL RESPONDENTS)			
PERCENTAGES	25-	26+	ALL
Agree	50	29	38
Disagree	34	60	50
Don't know/ no response	16	11	12

4.5 Agreement with action taken by the police.

More than half of all the respondents (56%) agreed with police action. But one third (34%) disagreed with it.

TABLE 4.5			
AGREEMENT WITH ACTION OF THE POLICE (ALL RESPONDENTS)			
PERCENTAGES	25-	26+	ALL
Agree	51	61	56
Disagree	34	32	34
Don't know/ no response	15	7	10

4.6 Agreement with action taken by the City Council or councillors.

Half of all respondents (52%) was unaware of action taken by the City Council or councillors in relation to the disturbances, and indicated this by answering 'don't know'. Of the remaining respondents, 21% indicated their agreement, and 27% their disagreement, with City Council/councillor action.

TABLE 4.6			
AGREEMENT WITH ACTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL/ COUNCILOORS (ALL RESPONDENTS)			
PERCENTAGES	25-	26+	ALL
Agree	26	18	21
Disagree	9	32	27
Don't know/ no response	55	50	52

4.7 The role of street protests.

More than half of all respondents (56%) thought that street protests, either at this particular time, or more generally, did not help the situation, but 41%, or two out of every five, thought that they did have a role.

TABLE 4.7			
BELIEF THAT STREET PROTEST HELP(ALL RESPONDENTS)			
PERCENTAGES	25-	26+	ALL
Street protests help	44	39	41
Street protests do not help	54	57	56
Don't know/ no response	2	4	3

4.8 Views on relations between Asian and black people in the Lozells area.

Two third (66%) of all respondents in the aftermath of the disturbances continued to believe that Asians and black people got on well together in the area, with 27% disagreeing with that view.

TABLE 4.8			
AGREEMENT THAT ASIANS AND BLACK PEOPLE IN THIS AREA USUALLY GET ON WELL TOGETHER (ALL RESPONDENTS)			
PERCENTAGES	25-	26+	ALL
Agree	65	65	66
Disagree	22	31	27
Don't know/ no response	13	4	7

Section Five

Comparison of Black, Asian and White responses

5.1 Belief that a serious sexual assault took place.

Black, Asian, and white respondents were all equally aware of the October disturbances in Birmingham.

Roughly the same proportion of black, Asian and white response had learned of the event through personal involvement, word of mouth, or through the media. A larger proportion of young people of all ethnic groups had heard of events through the media, including local radio.

More than twice as many Asians than whites claimed to have been surprised by the story of the serious sexual assault. Black people, remarkably in the light of events, were more inclined than other groups to express their initial disbelief in the story. Asians were more likely to claim they had been upset by the claims, and whites to say their first reaction was one of fear.

When asked whether they believed a serious sexual assault had taken place, a majority of the total sample, as well as of black and Asian respondents, said that they simply did not know one way or the other. In fact, black respondents (68%) were the most likely to say that they did not know whether the story was true or false. This is a different picture from the one presented by the media.

White respondents were the most likely to disbelieve the story of the sexual assault, with nearly half of them (46%) asserting that it had not taken place. Similarly, 44% of Asians thought that the incident had not taken place but, of black people, only 16% was prepared to discount the assault claim altogether, the majority reserving judgement until evidence was presented for or against the allegation.

PERCENTAGE	BLACK	ASIAN	WHITES
Did Take Place	16	4	10
Did Not Take Place	16	44	46
Don't Know/No Response	68	52	44

5.2 Impact of the 22 October disturbance

Black people were the least likely to be affected by the disturbances in Lozells. More than twice as many Asians (52%) than of black people (23%) had been affected, but white respondents were the most likely of all three groups to claim adverse effects. In any case, the lives of more than half of the Asians and white respondents had been touched in some way by the events on the 22 October.

Respondents had witnessed the violence and some had suffered damage to their property and livelihoods. Many had had access to shops and roads restricted, or had felt obliged to stay at home for reasons of safety. People had reported that they had been afraid for their own welfare and for family and friends. Whites, in particular, reported that they had suffered psychologically. Asians complained of verbal abuse, having to close their shops, loss of business, and damage to vehicles.

TABLE 5.2			
PEOPLE WHO CLAIMED TO BE AFFECTED BY THE DISTURBANCES (ETHNIC COMPARISON)			
PERCENTAGE	BLACK	ASIAN	WHITE
Affected	23	52	56
Not affected	73	48	31
Don't know/no response	04	0	13

5.3 Agreement with action taken by black groups

A clear majority of black, Asian, and white respondents disagreed with the action taken by the black community when the allegations of a serious sexual assault were made and became public. Nevertheless, a third of black (34%) and as many as 28% of Asians supported the action (as compared with 10% of the white population). The action was more popular among those aged 25 or under, with 44% of black and 52% of Asians youngsters supporting black action. This last extraordinary figure, if it is to be believed, is counterbalanced by the extremely large proportion of Asians aged 26 and above (87%) who opposed the action of the black population.

TABLE 5.3			
AGREEMENT WITH ACTION OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY (ETHNIC COMPARISON)			
PERCENTAGE	BLACK	ASIAN	WHITE
Agree	34	28	10
Disagree	61	65	69
Don't know/no response	5	7	21

5.4 Agreement with action taken by Asian groups

Difference of opinion between black, Asian, and white respondents are starkly highlighted by the question about agreement or disagreement with the actions of the Asian community, although precisely to what action reference is being made is not specified in the question, and is left to the interviewee to interpret. It may, of course, simply relate to the stabbing to death by an Asian gang of 23-year-old Isiah Young-Sam. Nevertheless, two thirds of both black and white people were prepared to say that they did not agree with the action taken by the Asian community. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, and in contrast, 70% of the Asian community agreed with the action of their group, with just 22% disagreeing. The Asian community is not, of course, referring to the stabbing of Isiah Young-Sam.

TABLE 5.4			
AGREEMENT WITH ACTION OF THE ASIAN COMMUNITY (ETHNIC COMPARISON)			
PERCENTAGE	BLACK	ASIAN	WHITE
Agree	23	70	18
Disagree	66	22	64
Don't know/no response	11	8	18

5.5 Agreement with action taken by the police

White respondents (72%) were most supportive of the action of the police in relation to the allegation of sexual assault and subsequent events, but a clear majority of black respondents (57%) were also positive. The Asian community was less approving and divided between those who approved of the police action (43%) and those who disapproved (44%). Comments from Asian respondents indicated annoyance by Asian shopkeepers over not being given the support they expected from the police when faced with antagonism from black people.

TABLE 5.5			
AGREEMENT WITH ACTION OF THE POLICE (ETHNIC COMPARISON)			
PERCENTAGE	BLACK	ASIAN	WHITE
Agree	57	43	72
Disagree	32	44	23
Don't know/no response	11	13	5

5.6 Agreement with action taken by the City Council or councillors

More than three quarters of black people (78%) did not know of any action taken by the City Council or councillors in relation to the events of the 22 October, and the rest were evenly split as to whether they agreed or disagreed with it. This response was similar to that of white interviewees, of whom 59% did not know, while 23% agreed and 18% disagreed with Council action. Asian respondents were less accommodating of the City and its councillors. Half of them disagreed with the action taken or, as field workers reported, the lack of any effective intervention on the part of the Council. The rest were divided between those who approved of action taken (28%) and those who did not know of it (22%).

TABLE 5.6			
AGREEMENT WITH ACTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL/COUNCILLORS (ETHNIC COMPARISON)			
PERCENTAGES	BLACK	ASIAN	WHITE
Agree	11	28	23
Disagree	11	50	18
Don't know/no response	78	22	59

5.7 The role of street protest

In the aftermath of the disturbances on 22 October in Lozells, there were clear differences between ethnic groups in their perception of the role of street protests. Nearly three out of five black respondents (59%) believed that street protests might help the situation, in contrast to three out of five Asians (63%) who believed that they were a hindrance. Likewise, nearly three out of every four white people (72%) were opposed to street protests.

PERCENTAGES	BLACK	ASIAN	WHITE
Street protests help	59	35	28
Street protests don't help	34	63	72
Don't know/no response	7	2	0

5.8 Views on relations between Asian and black people in the Lozells area

A large majority of black, Asian, and white respondents agreed that Asians and black people living in the area of Lozells usually got on well together. However, the proportion of those who agreed varied from the high of 80% Asian, through the 60% white to the lower figure of 57% black. Nevertheless, a clear majority of all three ethnic groups continue to believe even in the post-conflict situation, that Asian and black people locally get on well together. Among black people, too, but not in the other two ethnic categories, young people (25 and under) are more inclined to think relations with Asians remain good. Hopefully, these positive findings can be built on.

PERCENTAGES	BLACK	ASIAN	WHITE
Agree	57	80	60
Disagree	39	10	30
Don't know/no response	4	10	10

Section Six

Brief note on the ethnic demography of Birmingham and Lozells

6.1 Birmingham

At the 2001 census, Birmingham had a population which was 70.4% white, 19.5% Asian, 6.1% black, and 1.1 % Chinese. Just over two thirds of Birmingham's population then, are white. For every one black person in the City, there are 11 white and 3 Asian.

The Asian population of 190,688 is made up of 104,017 Pakistanis, 20,836 Bangladeshis, and 10,086 other Asians. Pakistanis outnumber Indians in a ratio roughly 2 to 1. Within the Asian population 140,033 identify themselves as Muslim, 28,592 as Sikh ,and 19,358 as Hindu.

Of the total Asian population, 72% lives in nine wards (2001 boundaries). In three wards, Asians constitute 60% of the population and in a further six wards, 30-60% of the population. A further twenty-three wards of the City have an Asian population of less than 10%.

There are 58,832 black people (6.1% of the total population) living in Birmingham. At the time of the census, 6,206 of these were of Black African ethnicity, but most were Black Caribbean. The black population constitutes less than 30% of the population in every electoral ward.

6.2 Handsworth, including Lozells

The area of north central Birmingham where the disturbances occurred, used to fall into the Handsworth ward before boundary changes in June 2004.

In June 2001, the population of the Handsworth ward stood at 25,912. Its ethnic and religious composition was as follows:

OVERALL ETHNIC COMPOSITION HANDSWORTH WARD (CENSUS 2001)		
	NUMBER	PROPORTION
Asian or Asian British	14,710	56.76%
Black or Black British	4,877	18.82%
White	4,788	18.48%
Mixed	860	3.32%
Chinese or other ethnic	677	2.61%

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION HANDSWORTH WARD (CENSUS 2001)		
	NUMBER	PROPORTION
Christian	7,193	27.76
Hindu	1,111	4.29
Muslim	11,757	45.37
Sikh	1,513	5.76

ASIAN ETHNICITY, HANDSWORTH WARD (CENSUS 2001)		
	NUMBER	PROPORTION
Indian	4839	18.67
Pakistan	6538	25.23
Bangladeshi	2827	10.91
Other	506	1.95

BLACK ETHNICITY HANDSWORTH WARD (CENSUS 2001)		
	NUMBER	PROPORTION
Caribbean	3959	15.25
African	443	1.71
Other	476	1.84

These figures show that the population in the area affected by disturbances breaks down in a ratio of 3 Asians:1 black:1 white. In other words, Asians outnumber both blacks and whites in a ratio of 3 to 1. The white population of the area is now less than that of the black, has a different age profile, and is declining.

The Muslim population of 11,757 is larger than that of Christian, Hindu and Sikh put together. The Sikh population has declined to 1,513. The majority of the Asian population of Handsworth is of Pakistani ethnic origin and is Muslim.

The black population is still mainly Caribbean and Christian, but is more likely to find itself in contact with the substantial Asian population, than with the white.

Section Seven

Brief note on methodology

Findings are based on a market research exercise undertaken in the eleven-day period from 24 October to 2 November 2005 by REWM fieldworkers.

A total of 129 interviews was conducted on the Lozells Road (B4144) between the junction with Villa Road and the A34 underpass. Respondents were selected on the basis of a quota sample categorised by ethnicity, age and gender, which achieved the following numbers:

ETHNIC CATEGORY	AGE		GENDER		TOTAL
	25 -	26+	M	F	
Black	18	26	30	14	44
Asian	23	23	27	19	46
White	14	25	20	19	39
Totals	55	74	77	52	129

All those interviewed lived in the West Midlands and 95% were Birmingham residents, most of them from the Aston, Handsworth, Lozells, Newtown, and Perry Barr areas of the city.

Fieldworkers were divided on the basis of their ethnicity into black, Asian, and white teams who were expected to visually identify, select and match their quota on the street. All fieldworkers operated in pairs and checked each other's work.

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