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Welsh Government

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# Anti-racist Wales evidence report: racism relating to climate change, environment, and rural affairs

A report of the experiences and ambitions Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people have relating to climate change, environment, and rural affairs matters.

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# Executive summary

In June 2022, the **Anti-racist Wales Action Plan** (ArWAP) emerged as a transformational path toward creating an anti-racist Wales by 2030. This groundbreaking plan not only defines the essence of anti-racism but also distinguishes itself as a dynamic framework rather than a static strategy. It has been developed through a process of co-production, reflecting the diverse array of stakeholders.

In its first iteration the ArWAP referenced the need for inclusion of climate change and environmental matters for action. **Reports on diversity** in UK workplaces consistently identify that the environment, followed by farming, fishing and forestry professions are the least diverse sectors in the UK. Furthermore, the experiences and views of ethnic minority people in Wales on 'environmental' issues have never been formally explored.

In this report, the Welsh Government sought to understand what information was already available on the relationship between ethnic minority people and environmental matters and where there were evidence gaps. It also gathered information directly from ethnic minority people in Wales.

The evidence presented in this report sought to:

- examine Welsh data to test whether some of the findings in other parts of the UK, (mainly England) are also true in Wales
- systematically scan the research literature to understand what previous research has concluded around ethnic minorities communities' interactions with climate change, environment and rural affairs issues and ascertain any Welsh specific research and findings
- initiate community dialogues with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people about their views, experiences and ambitions of climate change, environment, and rural affairs matters

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These 3 pieces of research are drawn together in this report, with emphasis on the insights from the community dialogues.

## Findings

Scans of the research literature identified that the most researched area is access to green space, either access to urban green space or access to the countryside by ethnic minority people. The review reveals a clear picture of inequality of access to green space based on ethnicity, although there is difficulty in disentangling ethnicity from a range of other demographic determinants, not least of which is socio-economic status.

Spatial analysis indicates that ethnic minority groups are overrepresented in the most deprived areas for air quality, ambient green space and flood risk in Wales, consistent with evidence from England.

The community dialogue strand of work delivered a hugely important insight into the experiences, priorities, and ambitions of ethnic minority people in Wales. The 5 Ethnic minority groups representing a range of ethnic communities across Wales reported on the dialogues in their respective communities.

The dialogues highlighted a desire within ethnic minority communities in Wales to get involved in environmental issues at local and national scales. Discussions emphasized the role of community, and the opportunities environmental work and conversations could have in bringing people together. The opportunity to grow your own food was singled out as something many were particularly interested in. Conversely, the dialogues revealed substantial barriers such as knowledge gaps, discriminatory practices, and feelings of social isolation hindering full participation in environmental initiatives and access to green spaces. Across all the groups, the lack of ethnic minority people in leadership roles representing them and their concerns was a common theme.

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In conclusion, people of ethnic minority background in Wales face barriers created by exclusions and racism preventing them from fully participating in ‘environmental’ activities. In Wales, they report how they experience racism overtly when visiting or using green spaces. This forced exclusion from public spaces leads to feelings of exclusion, isolation and disconnection with people and nature. They are also disproportionately exposed to environmental hazards, such as poor air quality and flood risk. Lack of representation and diversity in leadership roles in environmental organisations and government, speaks of systemic inequalities and lack of opportunity for people of ethnic minority background to pursue careers in these sectors or to feel represented in the public debates of the issues.

However, there are those within the ethnic minority communities who care deeply about environmental issues and are very engaged and informed and working in their communities, but who are not included in the mainstream discussion forums.

## Introduction

The **Anti-racist Wales Action Plan** (ArWAP) emerged in 2022, as a transformational path toward creating an anti-racist Wales by 2030. This groundbreaking plan not only defines the essence of anti-racism but also distinguishes itself as a dynamic framework rather than a static strategy. A coproduction process was adopted in the development of the ArWAP. The Action Plan reflects the diverse array of stakeholders, including trade unions, public and private sectors, community organizations, and mentors, ensuring its robustness and intersectional nature, deeply rooted in the lived experiences of its co-authors.

At its core, the ArWAP is structured around 11 policy themes, each summarising the high-level goals and actionable strategies. These initiatives aim to deliver

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transformative changes across 6 areas of an individual's life: systemic racism in everyday encounters, service delivery, workplace dynamics, job opportunities, representation in positions of power, and the specific experiences faced by refugees and asylum seekers. The overarching aim is to collectively catalyze measurable improvements in the lives of Black, Asian, and Ethnic Minority individuals.

In its' first iteration, the ArWAP acknowledges that tackling racism in the policy areas of environment, climate change and rural affairs were not included and that they would be addressed in future iterations. This report represents the first step in the delivery of that commitment, undertaking a synthesis of evidence to shed light on the experiences of ethnic minorities in navigating racism within the areas of climate change, environmental stewardship, and food systems.

**Reports on diversity** in UK workplaces consistently identify that environment, followed by farming, fishing and forestry professions are the least diverse sectors in the UK. Furthermore, the experiences of ethnic minority people in Wales of these matters have never been formally explored. Are their experiences reflective of the findings of research at a UK level or are the experiences, ambitions, and priorities different for ethnic minority people in Wales?

In this work, the Welsh Government sought to understand what information was already available on the relationship between ethnic minority people and environmental matters and where there were evidence gaps. It also gathered information from ethnic minority people in Wales.

The evidence presented in this report sought to:

- examine Welsh data to test whether some of the findings in other parts of the UK, (mainly England) are also true in Wales
- scan the research literature to gain understanding of what previous research has concluded around ethnic minorities groups interactions with climate

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change, environment and rural affairs issues and ascertain any Welsh specific research and findings

- initiate dialogue with ethnic minority communities in Wales about their views, experiences, and willingness to get involved in climate change, environment, and rural affairs matters

This report draws on these 3 pieces of research, emphasis on the insights drawn from the community dialogues.

By focusing on the voices of Welsh ethnic communities, this report seeks to integrate their perspective into the overarching goals and actions of the Wales Anti-racist Action Plan.

## Empirical evidence review

This section of the report includes:

- Examination of Welsh data to test whether some of the findings in other parts of the UK, (mainly England) are also true in Wales.
- A rapid systematic scan of the research literature to understand what previous research has concluded around ethnic minority communities' interactions with climate change, environment and rural affairs issues and ascertain any Welsh specific research and findings.

## Definitions

For these analyses green space is defined as vegetated land, public parks, playing fields, sports facilities, play areas, allotments, informal spaces, food growing spaces, rivers, canals, lakes, ponds and seashore maintained for recreation and enjoyment of communities in urban (villages, towns and cities)

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settings.

Blue space is a sub-set of green space and is officially described as ‘outdoor environments; either natural or manmade; that prominently feature water and are accessible to people’.

The following indicators are used in the measurement of the physical environment domain in the **Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation** (WIMD) 2019. WIMD is the Welsh Government’s official measure of relative deprivation for small areas (lower super output areas, or LSOAs) in Wales. It identifies areas with the highest concentrations of several different types (or domains) of deprivation. WIMD 2019 ranked all small areas in Wales from 1 (most deprived) to 1,909 (least deprived) in both overall deprivation and in each of the domains and indicators.

Access to green space is an indicator measured by calculating the proportion of households in each LSOA that are within a 5-minute walk (approximately 300 meters) of an accessible natural green space. Accessible natural green spaces were defined using Ordnance Survey MasterMap Topography Layer® combined with Natural Resources Wales recognized natural greenspace typologies. The output highlights sites that could confidently be described as natural feeling places to which the public have right of access. Sites such as golf courses, allotments and cemeteries were excluded from the list.

Ambient green space is an indicator which measures the “greenness” of the environment within 300m of each dwelling. This indicator measures the near red and infrared reflectiveness of the area within 300m measuring the ‘leafiness’ of the neighbourhood reflecting gardens, urban trees, hedges and vegetation in the vicinity of each dwelling.

Air quality is a sub-domain in WIMD 2019 consisting of three pollutant indicators, measured by assigning a concentration of NO<sub>2</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub> to each residential dwelling in Wales based on which square kilometre of Wales it sits in.



For each LSOA, the pollutant concentrations associated with each dwelling within it were averaged to give average NO<sub>2</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub> concentration values. These values were then population weighted (further information about a recent methodological change and the decision not to revise historic data is provided in the [national indicator StatsWales cube metadata](#)). The air quality sub-domain refers to the deprivation ranking based on the combined scores of all 3 pollutant indicators.

Flood risk is calculated as the proportion of households in each small area at risk of flooding from rivers, the sea and surface water flooding. The risk is based on predicted frequency, rather than the level of damage caused by flooding.

More information on these WIMD 2019 indicators can be found in the [WIMD 2019 technical report](#).

## Spatial analyses

The estimates presented in this section show the proportion of ethnic minority groups (as recorded in the 2021 Census) who reside in the 10% most deprived areas of Wales with respect to the WIMD 2019 physical environment indicators. For each indicator, the 10% most deprived areas consist of around 190 LSOAs.

The data are derived from various physical environment deprivation indicators from WIMD 2019 and ethnic group populations from the 2021 Census. The [ONS “create a custom dataset” tool](#) was used to source small area ethnic group data for Wales. Detailed information on the Census ethnic group variable can be found on the [ONS website](#).

This is an extension of analysis produced in 2023 investigating the distribution of ethnic groups across the overall [WIMD 2019 deprivation groupings of Wales](#). The methodology used for linking Census 2021 small area data to WIMD small area data can be found in the quality and methodology section of the statistical

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release.

Media reports suggest that ethnic minority people are disproportionately exposed to environmental risks in England. To investigate whether this was also the case in Wales we used the following WIMD 2019 physical environment deprivation indicators: air quality sub-domain, access to green space indicator, ambient green space indicator, and flood risk indicator.

Tables 1a-1d display the proportions of each ethnic group living in the 10% most deprived areas with respect to each WIMD physical environment measure. Ethnic groups on the first column of the table are grouped according to the high-level ethnic group categories displayed on the Census 2021 form, from top to bottom: “Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh”, “Black, Black British, Black Welsh, African or Caribbean”, “Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups”, “White” and “Other Ethnic Group”.

## Tables 1a to 1d

Proportion of each ethnic group living in the 10% most deprived areas with respect to WIMD physical environment indicators.

### 1a: air quality sub-domain

Ethnicity	Percentage living in the 10% most deprived LSOA's
Bangladeshi	51
Chinese	29
Indian	36

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<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Percentage living in the 10% most deprived LSOA's</b>
Pakistani	61
Other Asian	27
African	48
Caribbean	33
Other Black	43
White and Asian	21
White and Black African	26
White and Black Caribbean	26
Other mixed or multiple ethnic groups	26
Gypsy or Irish traveller	15
Irish	15
Roma	45
Welsh, English, Scottish, Northern Irish or British	8

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<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Percentage living in the 10% most deprived LSOA's</b>
Other white	21
Arab	50
Any other ethnic group	36

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## **1b: access to green space indicator**

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<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Percentage living in the 10% most deprived LSOA's</b>
Bangladeshi	10
Chinese	8
Indian	10
Pakistani	13
Other Asian	8
African	8
Caribbean	9
Other Black	8

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Ethnicity	Percentage living in the 10% most deprived LSOA's
White and Asian	10
White and Black African	7
White and Black Caribbean	8
Other mixed or multiple ethnic groups	8
Gypsy or Irish traveller	6
Irish	11
Roma	10
Welsh, English, Scottish, Northern Irish or British	10
Other white	8
Arab	8
Any other ethnic group	9

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## 1c: ambient green space indicator

Ethnicity	Percentage living in the 10% most deprived LSOA's
Bangladeshi	33
Chinese	26
Indian	27
Pakistani	34
Other Asian	20
African	35
Caribbean	26
Other Black	29
White and Asian	18
White and Black African	21
White and Black Caribbean	20
Other mixed or multiple ethnic groups	21
Gypsy or Irish traveller	19

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<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Percentage living in the 10% most deprived LSOA's</b>
Irish	15
Roma	27
Welsh, English, Scottish, Northern Irish or British	9
Other white	18
Arab	40
Any other ethnic group	24

## **1d: flood risk Indicator**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Percentage living in the 10% most deprived LSOA's</b>
Bangladeshi	27
Chinese	10
Indian	14
Pakistani	31

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<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Percentage living in the 10% most deprived LSOA's</b>
Other Asian	11
African	19
Caribbean	15
Other Black	14
White and Asian	11
White and Black African	14
White and Black Caribbean	13
Other mixed or multiple ethnic groups	12
Gypsy or Irish traveller	22
Irish	10
Roma	19
Welsh, English, Scottish, Northern Irish or British	10
Other white	12

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<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Percentage living in the 10% most deprived LSOA's</b>
Arab	11
Any other ethnic group	13

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The analysis illustrated above, demonstrates that ethnic minority groups in Wales are disproportionately represented in the most deprived areas regarding air quality, ambient green space, and flood risk. On the other hand, this analysis did not highlight as much disparity among ethnic groups in terms of access to green space.

### **Air quality sub-domain**

Some ethnic minority groups were significantly over-represented in the 10% most deprived LSOAs in respect to air quality scores, including:

- 3 in 5 people who identified as “Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh: Pakistani” (61%).
- Around half of those who identified as “Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh: Bangladeshi” (51%).
- Around half of those who identified as “Other ethnic group: Arab” (50%).
- Around half of those who identified as “Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African: African” (48%).

For context, around 11% of the population of Wales overall lived in these areas.

## Access to green space indicator

The likelihood of living in the 10% most deprived areas in terms of access to green space was much less variable over different ethnic groups than the other indicators. Those who identified as “Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh: Pakistani” were again the most likely to live in these areas (13%), but this was relatively close to the proportion for the whole population (10%).

## Ambient green space indicator

The most likely groups to live in the 10% most deprived LSOAs with respect to ambient green space were:

- “Other ethnic group: Arab” (40%).
- “Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African: African” (35%).
- “Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh: Pakistani” (34%).
- “Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh: Bangladeshi” (33%).

The proportions of these groups living in areas with the poorest ambient green space scores were significantly higher than for the population of Wales overall (10%). These were also the same ethnic groups significantly overrepresented in areas with poor air quality.

## Flood risk indicator

The ethnic groups with the highest proportions of people living in the 10% most deprived LSOAs in terms of flood risk were:

- “Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh: Pakistani” (31%).
- “Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh: Bangladeshi” (27%).

- “White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller” (22%).
- “White: Roma” (19%).
- “Black, Black British, Black Welsh, African or Caribbean: African” (19%).

The corresponding proportion of the population of Wales overall in these areas was 10%.

## Rapid literature review

The Welsh Government commissioned the **Advancing Capacity for Climate and Environment Social Science** (ACCESS) team based at Exeter University to undertake a rapid literature review. ACCESS is a 5-year climate and environment social science network funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). The team adopted a rapid, short-term methodology to conduct the literature review. They looked at the 7 topics listed below.

### List 1: list of topic areas explored in the literature review and community dialogues

1. Recreation.
2. Workplaces, volunteering, and activism.
3. Local environment.
4. Climate change issues.
5. Biodiversity crisis.
6. Food and food cultures.
7. Leadership, representation and role models.

Using the agreed limited parameters in their initial scan of the literature, the ACCESS team were unable to find sufficient literature to constitute a systematic literature review on any of the topics other than access to green space and countryside. As a result, it was agreed that their review would focus on the

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recreation topic area, including access to green space (including the sub-set of blue space) and access to the countryside.

For the topic of green space and access to countryside, 41 relevant references, academic and grey literature, quantitative and qualitative studies, and original research alongside systematic literature reviews were captured. Geographically, the focus primarily centred on the UK, with a notable bias towards England. The publications that reflected the Welsh situation either exclusively focused on Wales or included Welsh case studies. The literature broadly emphasized green space issues, with minimal attention to 'blue space' concerns. In terms of topics, there were more references on access compared to volunteering, although some studies integrated both within broader discussions of ethnicity and environmental engagement.

Primarily, inequalities regarding ethnicity and green space access have been discussed for decades, with early works such as Julian Agyeman's dating back to the late 1980s. The literature can be broadly categorized into two sub-literatures: one examining ethnicity and nature engagement through a 'landscape' lens, focusing on race, identity, and the English countryside; the other using a 'health and well-being' lens, addressing access issues in urban green spaces among various demographic groups. Although engaging with green spaces offers numerous health and well-being benefits, evidence indicates that not all demographic groups can access these benefits equally, particularly ethnic minority people.

The review highlights that the evidence varies in robustness and disentangling ethnicity from other demographic determinants like socio-economic status is challenging. However, recent reports paint a clear picture of inequality in green space access based on ethnicity. These recent reports include:

- Office for National Statistics (2020) found that Black individuals were 2.4 times less likely than White individuals to have a private garden.
- CPRE/NEF (2021) reported that ethnic minorities have on average 11 times

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less access to green space.

- Ramblers/YouGov (2020) survey revealed that people from ethnic minority backgrounds were less likely to live within a 5-minute walk of a green space and report a variety of green spaces within walking distance.
- Friends of the Earth (2020) discovered that almost 40% of people from 'Black and Asian Minority Ethnic backgrounds' live in England's most green space-deprived neighbourhoods, compared to 14% of white people.
- National Trust study (2020) found that Black and Asian people visit natural settings 60% less than white people.
- Natural England (2019) reported that only 1% of visitors to National Parks are from a Black and Asian minority ethnic background, despite comprising 10% of the national population.

These reports collectively illustrate that individuals from ethnic minority groups have less access to outdoor space at home and are less likely to live near green spaces, visit the countryside or national parks or spend time in nature.

Natural England's **Monitoring Engagement with the Natural Environment** (MENE) Data is a useful starting point to get a sense of what is preventing people from across all of society from accessing and engaging with green space. The MENE survey was a survey of people in England and was undertaken annually between 2009 and 2019 and collected data about outdoor recreation and attitudes towards, and engagement with, the natural environment. Over the course of its 10 years, it collected information from nearly half a million respondents. It is one of the largest data sets of its kind in the world, and it is designated as an official national statistic. It is an extremely useful and robust dataset.

What is immediately apparent from MENE data is that there are many reasons why people of all races, do not visit the natural environment. The MENE survey coded interview responses into 23 different categories. In a study that used data drawn from the first 6 waves of the survey 2009 to 2010, 2015 to 2016, Boyd et al. (2018) ranked the reasons given by survey respondents for not visiting

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natural environments (see Table 1). Their analysis found that the most common reasons given were being 'too busy at work', followed by 'poor health', 'being too busy at home', and 'no particular reason'.

**Table 1: reasons respondents could select for not visiting natural environments at all/more often in the last 12 months**

Rank	Reasons for not visiting natural environments	%
1	Too busy at work	20.2
2	Poor health	18.5
3	Too busy at home	15.8
4	No particular reason	14.7
5	Old age	13.9
6	Bad/poor weather	9.7
7	A physical disability	9.3
8	Not interested	6.2
9	Too expensive	4.8
10	No access to a car	3.6

Rank	Reasons for not visiting natural environments	%
15	This isn't something for me/ people like me	1.4
17	Lack of suitable to go/suitable paths	0.6
21	I don't feel welcome/feel out of place	0.2

Source: Boyd et al. (2018) based on MENE data

The top 10 reasons provided does not explicitly mention ethnicity. Since the survey represents society, this absence might not be surprising. However, considering the unequal access to green space and the survey's representativeness of the English population, one might anticipate reasons such as 'lack of suitable places to visit', 'this isn't something for me' and 'I feel out of place' to rank higher. The fact that they don't suggests that while the survey is robust and valuable, it may not fully capture the experiences of ethnic minorities, their reasons for not visiting natural environments and the various barriers they encounter.

To have a more robust understanding, academic literature such as Robinson et al. (2023), provides us with the much-needed empirical evidence. While most research in this field looks at barriers to access across a range of demographic groups, with the focus being on socio-economically deprived communities, Robinson et al. have looked specifically at barriers to green space access for, what they refer to as, 'racialised individuals and communities'.

Based on a systematic literature review, and a subsequent focus on 10 key quantitative studies carried out in the UK and US (Robinson et al. 2023) identified and categorised the main barriers to access to green space for racialised individuals and communities (see below):

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- Psycho-social or interpersonal barriers with responses to the barriers including feeling unwelcome, cultural or language barriers, or low motivation to exercise.
- Practical barriers with responses to the barriers including, financial concerns such as travel costs, parking and entrance fees. Poor quality or aesthetics of the green space visited due to lack of amenities, littering or low maintenance.
- Environmental barriers with responses to the barriers including less access to green space due to the location and safety concerns, comfort or less trust in the neighbourhood of where the green space is located.
- Experience of knowledge barriers with responses to the barriers including, prior knowledge of the destination or lack of affinity with nature.

The most frequently reported barriers to access across the 10 studies were: 1.) poor quality/aesthetics of green space; 2.) safety concerns/comfort; 3.) financial concerns; and 4.) availability of green space, based on location.

## Evidence from community dialogues

### Introduction

The first scan of the literature for the literature review revealed limited research, insight, or discussion around ethnic minority people's relationship with environmental matters, and even less on specifically Welsh ethnic minority communities (it should be noted, that rapid literature review approach does not constitute comprehensive search of the literature). In response to the limited findings of the rapid literature review, the Welsh Government funded several community groups to undertake research within their communities around a range of environmental topics.

To reflect the aims of the ArWAP, these initial dialogues focused on policy topics

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with the potential for immediate positive impact on the lives of ethnic minorities. The dialogues span across varied areas, encompassing the accessibility of recreational spaces, participation in climate change and environmental sectors, community environmental concerns, climate change action, protecting biodiversity, food consumption practices, and leadership representation. These thematic areas served as catalysts for engaging communities in meaningful conversations, exploring the nuances of racism and co-creating solutions that foster inclusivity and equity.

The dialogues with the ethnic minority groups provide a rich source of insight, exploring the multifaceted forms of racism entrenched within these areas of life. By embracing diverse perspectives and experiences, these dialogues pave the way for actionable strategies to create a Wales where every individual, regardless of background, can thrive in a society built on principles of justice and equality.

Ethnic minorities in Wales encounter **disproportionate socio-economic challenges** which are intertwined with environmental issues. Recognising the imperative to amplify the voices of minority communities to effectively tackle these challenges, this report synthesizes insights gleaned from community dialogues with various ethnic minority groups in Wales.

## Methodology

The Welsh Government commissioned 5 community groups to undertake dialogues within their communities. The groups were offered the choice of topics to choose from (**see List 1**) that would most engage and interest their community and social groups they were planning to work with.

Each group proposed their own method of engagement tailored to meet the needs of their participants, in respect of interests, cultural norms, language and legal status; for example, some groups required anonymity to enable them to

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participate. The methodologies also included socio-economic considerations, such as running evening meetings or community meals to support families and those people working multiple jobs to participate in the dialogues.

Each group had the freedom to interpret the topic titles as they wished with their participants. In respect of green space, most groups interpreted this as vegetated areas maintained for public use in an urban setting, differentiated from 'access to the countryside', which was essentially going to a rural area to enjoy the countryside in a wider sense.

Dialogues were delivered by the following organisations:

- Green Soul: representing Black, Asian, Arab and other ethnic minorities in South Wales.
- Climate Cymru Ethnic Minorities: representing a range of different ethnic backgrounds.
- The Romani Cultural and Arts Company representing Gypsies, Roma, and Traveller communities.
- North Wales Africa Society: representing people from African and Afro-Caribbean backgrounds.
- KIRAN Cymru: community group bringing together all members of community with emphasis on inclusivity of ethnic minority people.

In terms of the policy themes selected by the community groups to start discussions, 4 groups started with access to green space or the countryside, 1 set out to discuss issues in the workplace, 2 talked about climate change, 2 discussed local environment, two talked about food purchasing and food waste, 3 discussed growing your own food and finally one picked up on the theme of leadership. It should be noted that these were starting points and discussions moved around multiple themes.

It is noteworthy that the thematic areas researched did not include the farming, fishing and forestry areas for now. However, there is room for additional

evidence gathering to cover these areas in future.

The evidence from the literature review highlighted the barriers and challenges ethnic minorities face in engaging with environmental issues. The dialogues powerfully describe the lived experience of these barriers and challenges for ethnic minority people living in Wales.

Employing a multifaceted research approach, this evidence synthesis study embraces the different methodologies employed by the different community groups, ranging from surveys and focus groups to interviews and dialogue sessions, capturing both quantitative data and qualitative narratives. Through this comprehensive lens, this research captures the rich tapestry of perspectives and experiences of ethnic minorities in Wales, offering invaluable insights to shape future initiatives and policies.

Details of the methods, people engaged and outputs of each of the community dialogues can be found in the individual community reports published alongside this report.

## **Synthesis of the outputs of the Community reports**

### **Recreation: green space and access to the countryside and coastal areas**

Generally, participants of the community dialogues expressed a strong desire to visit the countryside and engage with green spaces for their enjoyment and well-being, despite potential mitigating factors. However, concerns were raised about the quality and accessibility of green spaces within urban settings, with some people feeling unwelcome and disconnected from these spaces. In addition, access to green spaces for ethnic minorities was limited by a lack of variety and options of facilities.

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“ The green spaces are not respected in areas where there is a bigger population of ethnic minority people’ ‘Canal Park in the docks has lots of needles left over from drug users. ”

## Green Soul

Ethnic minorities reported issues of racial or religious identities as potential barriers to visiting the green space for some participants, leading to feelings of apprehension.

“ I am a Muslim and I wear Pathani Salwar. One day I was in Roath Park, a group of young people started calling me Bin Laden from the back. Later, when getting off, they kept on laughing at me and when they completely got off, they were shouting Bin Laden and pointing at me. The whole thing left me shocked and very sad. ”

## KIRAN Cymru

“ I was out with my family, when a White British male offered to take a photo of us, and he said, “say monkey” and I told him off that he can’t say that as children were there. ”

## North Wales Africa Society

However, younger children from ethnic minorities were found to frequently visit parks and green spaces more easily, while older individuals often felt isolated and estranged in local green spaces.

The way of life for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities can present particular circumstances in respect of the relationships with their neighbourhood. In their dialogues, the Romani Cultural and Arts Company explored the potential

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for racism in respect of allocated sites with their participants. However, their participants described their relationships with the local communities as positive, with good relationships in the neighbourhood and little direct racial discrimination. In respect of accessing and using green space, Romani participants highlighted two accessible parks in Newport that their communities engage with.

Participants from the North Wales Africa Society discussed how the members of their society enjoyed using green spaces for physical health, recreation, and social connections. However, the green spaces normally used are those that are accessible on foot, whereas access to green spaces like nature reserves was primarily by public transport, which was costly for many who did not own cars.

KIRAN Cymru echoed a similar desire to visit green spaces for social connections and physical health benefits. The lack of diversity in green spaces, concerns about accessibility and quality, and the reliance on public transport for access were commonly reported across all community groups surveyed. Furthermore, the findings from KIRAN Cymru highlighted several issues regarding racism experienced in parks and the impacts of those experiences, along with a view of a lack of suitable green space for ethnic minority groups in Wales. Other highlighted issues included poorly maintained parks, dangerous pavements, poor road maintenance leading to injuries, and safety concerns such as fast cyclists on park pavements. However, these challenges are common with the general neighborhoods and living conditions of ethnic minorities. In addition, the removal of benches in parks made it difficult for individuals to rest while walking, and there were problems with public transport accessibility and the cost of visiting parks or countryside further afield for families.

“ I like to go to the Brecon Beacons occasionally, but I wouldn't know how to get there if I didn't have my car. ”

Green Soul

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“ Knowing which local green spaces exist and if there [is] public [transport], if there slightly further away that would present as a barrier for me. ”

## Green Soul

“ Hello, I faced racism in Carmarthenshire. When I was queuing before an ice cream van in a park, a group of strangers called me ‘China Man’. The individuals' hurtful words were a direct expression of their prejudice and intolerance towards my Asian heritage. ”

## KIRAN Cymru

Furthermore, what is described by the participants demonstrates that the impact of racism on ethnic minority groups in Wales is profound, leading to deep-seated mistrust, emotional turmoil, and a pervasive sense of not belonging. People report feelings of vulnerability, fear for their safety, isolation, and rejection from the wider community. Specific instances of racism included verbal harassment, disregard at bus stops, physical assaults, offensive comments, and discriminatory practices based on language proficiency and ethnicity. These incidents highlighted the ongoing challenges faced by ethnic minority groups in Wales due to racism. To overcome these anxieties, when going to their local green space, ethnic minority adults tended to seek security by forming attachments with people that look like them in green spaces or visit as part of a social gathering.

Regarding the use of green spaces, most participants reported being able to access green spaces easily within urban settings, with concerns about the quality and welcoming nature of these spaces. Lack of functional green spaces in urban areas and transportation issues were cited as barriers to enjoying and interacting with green spaces in Wales. Some participants expressed apprehension about visiting the countryside due to their racial or religious

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identities, from their lived experiences in Wales. The dialogues highlighted the concerns of the lack of understanding and relationships by the wider white population particularly in rural areas, from personal experiences.

“ Unkept with overgrown grass” and a ‘general lack of safety. ”

North Wales Africa Society

“ One black African female stated that she feels unsafe with the presence of dogs with regards to fear of attack, ‘dogs without mouth guards or leashes wandering around in parks. ”

North Wales Africa Society

These accounts illustrate the experiences of people in Wales of the issues described by the empirical analyses.

## **Workplaces, volunteering, and activism: working and engaging in the climate change, environment sectors**

All participant groups showed knowledge and a level of engagement in terms of workplaces, volunteering, and activism in the climate change and environment sectors. They also demonstrated a willingness to be involved in efforts to address environmental issues and work towards a more sustainable future. This is likely to reflect the nature of the community groups engaged in this work as they are drawn from activist and volunteer organisations.

In terms of workplaces, NWAS and Climate Cymru Ethnic Minorities came together to run a specific dialogue engaging with professionals and postgraduate students directly working on environmental issues. As you would expect, the group had a more in depth understanding of climate change and environmental

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issues (including unstable seasons, deforestation, ozone layer depletion, excessive flooding, carbon dioxide emitted from cars, recycling, and proper waste disposal). The group enjoyed a deep conversation around environmental issues, but the conversation did not turn to personal experiences in the workplace.

The dialogues focusing on volunteering, showed that all the ethnic minority communities that were contracted to carry out the community dialogues were actively engaged in volunteering, and some of them e.g., NWAS and KIRAN Cymru are registered charities in England and Wales. Green Soul is a grassroots community comprised of ethnic minorities in South Wales focused on working and engaging in volunteering in climate change action and environmental activities. In terms of the responses from this community, all participants expressed worry or concern about the climate crisis and indicated a strong commitment to addressing environmental issues within the Green Soul organization. Climate Cymru Ethnic Minorities is a subgroup of Climate Cymru. It was established for ethnic minority individuals to have a platform for engagement for minority people with members of the wider community. During the community dialogues, members of this group showed a general understanding of climate change issues. Participants from Green Soul and Climate Cymru Ethnic Minorities groups agreed that apart from the government, individuals and society at large must play a major role in engaging with climate change and environmental issues.

The Gypsies, Roma and Travellers communities and the North Wales Africa Society displayed a shared concern about the climate crisis, with all participants showing some degree of concern. This indicates a recognition of the importance of addressing environmental issues within these communities. Similarly, KIRAN Cymru, as a community, also displayed concern about the climate crisis, with all participants expressing worry or concern.

On activism, Climate Cymru Ethnic Minorities and Green Soul reported on participating in campaigns on climate and environmental issues.



## **Local Environment: community environmental issues such as fly tipping, air pollution, recycling, and reuse**

Around 80% of overall participants across all the groups expressed satisfaction with the waste management system in Wales, while about 10% of Climate Cymru Ethnic Minorities were not satisfied and felt it needed improvement. Furthermore, participants in Climate Cymru Ethnic Minorities reported experiences of racial discrimination encountered with the contractors responsible for recycling/refuse bins collection around the Bangor local council area. Gypsies, Roma and Travellers participants described their local environment as quite poor, with very low standards of living and it was referred to as very 'precarious', 'appalling', and 'unsafe'.

Many respondents in North Wales Africa Society recognised the health and environmental benefits of taking care of the immediate surroundings for humans, animals, and aquatic life forms.

## **Climate change issues: including the role of society in tackling climate change; supporting action at an individual and community level**

A Just transition to a net zero economy and climate change adaptation.

Participants in Green Soul demonstrated a clear understanding of the impacts of climate change. They also wanted to engage in environmental action. Barriers to involvement included the way messages were delivered, lack of time, and limited information and engagement on climate issues. In the Climate Cymru Ethnic minorities community, they expressed a strong desire to participate in environmental action. The lack of diversity and inclusion in institutions, along with a lack of representation in leadership positions, were cited as reasons for limited engagement in climate change issues. Consultation with local authorities

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on strategies that embrace diversity was also seen as important.

## **Biodiversity crisis: views and priorities around biodiversity loss in Wales and abroad**

None of the community groups chose to tackle this topic with those in their community. Further targeted work will be required to elucidate the views and experiences of ethnic minority people in this area.

## **Food and food cultures: experiences of racism in food purchasing for home consumption and outside the home, food waste etcetera**

In Green Soul, many participants expressed concerns about living conditions and food quality when purchasing food for home consumption. The majority of those who participated in the dialogues said that they were unaware of or were unable to engage in growing initiatives locally. Growing your own food was relatively difficult for many people across all groups due to issues around space and skills set. Many respondents felt unable to grow at home as they lacked resources or knowledge. For the participants, from the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community, the 2 main factors that determined food purchases were price and the expiration of the food. They understood the importance of generating less food waste and buying only what they need to avoid unnecessary waste.

Members of the North Wales Africa Society prioritized buying fresh and clean food with origins they trusted. They also understood the importance of generating less food waste and buying only what they need to avoid unnecessary waste. They recognised the importance of not unnecessarily wasting food still in date and buying only what you need was also pointed out. Some experienced bias and unpleasantness while shopping, leading them to use self-checkout to reduce interactions with staff and other customers.

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Participants in KIRAN Cymru community reported difficulties in growing their own food due to issues with space and skills set. They also reported their inability to grow at home due to a lack of resources or knowledge. They understood the importance of generating less food waste and buying only what they need to avoid unnecessary waste. Some experienced bias and unpleasantness while shopping, also leading them to use self-checkout to reduce interactions with staff and other customers.

### **Growing your own food for community, health, dietary choice, environmental or climate change reasons: access to community growing, gardens, access to allotments or community gardens**

As regards to growing food, female participants indicated more willingness to engage. In Climate Cymru Ethnic minorities, the majority described the idea of growing their own food as 'very nice' and 'a good idea', especially the older female participants. Findings showed barriers to growing their own food such as: lack of garden or inadequate space/allotment; limited knowledge on home food gardening in the UK; lack of seeds of culturally appropriate plants (fruits and vegetables); lack of adequate information about community-based initiatives tailored towards minority ethnic communities. In the North Wales Africa Society, the idea of growing one's own food was described positively as a 'very good idea' and 'cheaper' by most participants, especially the older female participants.

### **Leadership, representation and role models on Boards and decision-making forums in the 3 sectors**

Leadership representation is key in decision making. In Climate Cymru Ethnic Minorities, 90% of male and female participants were not aware of the leadership structure of the environmental sector in Wales, neither did they know of anyone like them in a leadership position or representative position. In North

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Wales African Society, they had concerns about representation in decision-making. The Gypsy and Roman Travellers also reported on limited knowledge of the Welsh Government and cited the lack of representation of their members in decision-making. In KIRAN Cymru, 239 out of 248 participants stated that they had no knowledge of ARWAP.

## Conclusion

Using 3 different approaches to research, this report has identified several universal truths in respect of ethnic minority people and their lived experiences in environmental, climate change and rural affairs areas of life. The research also revealed some Welsh specific differences in the findings that require further investigation.

Evidence drawn from research literature identified that the most researched area in respect of ethnic minority people engaging with environmental issues is their use of and access to green space, (either access to urban green space or access to the countryside by ethnic minority people). The evidence presents a clear picture of inequality of access to green space based on ethnicity, however there is lack of certainty in disentangling ethnicity from a range of other demographic determinants, not least of which is socio-economic status.

The community dialogues provide first-hand accounts of how ethnic minority people in Wales have experienced racism and exclusion from these spaces as described in the literature. They also highlighted the socio-economic barriers discussed in the literature preventing access to green spaces, for instance, reliance on public transport or lack of access to a car. However, the dialogues also provide accounts of how ethnic minority people enjoy the green spaces they can access and more powerfully, how much they enjoyed getting into the countryside given the opportunity and the support to do so.

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The spatial analysis conducted indicates that ethnic minority groups are overrepresented in the most deprived areas for air quality, ambient green space, and flood risk in Wales, consistent with evidence from England.

Bringing the literature review and spatial analysis together, the literature review suggests that in England, ethnic minority people have less access to outdoor space at home, i.e. the housing they live in have limited or no gardens. The spatial analysis indicates that this is also the case in Wales, with neighbourhoods of predominantly ethnic minority people with the lowest ambient green space indicator. The literature review also suggests that in England ethnic minority communities have less access to urban green space, however, the spatial analysis for Wales indicates that physically, this is not the case in Wales, with neighborhoods with predominantly ethnic minority people having a similar amount of access to green space as the general population. The community dialogues describe a range of experiences, of both positive and negative aspects of environmental engagement, green space accessibility, and encounters with discrimination.

Positive reflections underscore the desire among individuals in Wales to engage with environmental issues, emphasising the importance of community involvement and the potential benefits of cultivating one's own food. Yet, amidst these positive findings, emerge barriers such as knowledge gaps, discriminatory practices, and feelings of isolation that impede the full participation of ethnic minorities in environmental initiatives and their access to green spaces.

Moreover, the reports shed light on the specific hurdles faced by Gypsies, Roma, and Traveller communities, including challenges related to living spaces, sustainability, and representation in decision-making processes. These insights highlight the importance for tailored solutions and support mechanisms to address the unique concerns of the different ethnic minority communities. Furthermore, the reports underscore the pressing need to forge an anti-racist Wales, wherein ethnic minorities are empowered to actively engage in environmental issues and access green spaces in their own way, and this is

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recognised in wider society to confront systemic inequalities.

In essence, this report highlights the need for concerted action by all people working in the environment sector (in its broadest terms) to heed the voices of ethnic minorities in Wales, championing inclusive approaches that foster environmental justice and equitable access to green spaces for all.

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