

# ICMUnlimited...

## **Electoral Commission 2014 Winter Tracker Research Survey: BME Booster**

Research Report  
Final version

# Technical details

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- This report contrasts findings from the mainstage of the 2014 Winter Tracker with findings for the 2014 BME Boost, which was conducted in parallel and funded by the Cabinet Office's Electoral Registration Transformation Programme. Results from the 2012 and 2013 BME Boosts are also included where applicable.

## Mainstage

- ICM interviewed a nationally representative quota sample of 1,205 adults aged 18+ living in the UK. The sample consisted of 1,001 interviews with people living in Great Britain (861 in England; 89 in Scotland; 51 in Wales) and a boost of 204 interviews with people living in Northern Ireland.
- Interviews were carried out by telephone between 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> December 2014.
- A representative sample was interviewed using ICM's telephone omnibus, with quotas set by age, gender and region.
- Data was weighted to match the profile of the UK population using age, gender, tenure, socio-economic grade, work status and region.

## BME Booster

- In addition to the mainstage of interviewing, a 'BME boost' was conducted amongst black and minority ethnic groups aged 18+ living in the UK.
- As part of the Boost Survey, ICM interviewed 1,003 BME respondents living in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Quotas were set to ensure a representative sample of each target ethnic groups was achieved. An additional 65 BME respondents interviewed as part of the mainstage were added to the BME dataset. Furthermore, and in a departure from previous years, 108 interviews were conducted face-to-face with Bangladeshi (84) and black Caribbean (24) adults, to make a **total sample of 1,176**.
- The BME Booster was conducted by telephone and took place between 6<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> January 2015.
- Data was weighted to match the profile of the UK BME population using a range of variables including ethnicity, gender, age, region, working status and religion.
- Results from the 2012 and 2013 BME Boosts are also included where applicable. These two surveys used an identical methodology to the 2014 BME Boost survey.
  - 2012 Boost: TNS conducted 999 BME interviews by telephone between 7<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2012 which, added to the 94 BME interviews from the 2012 mainstage, makes a total BME sample of 1,093.
  - 2013 Boost: ICM conducted 1,002 BME interviews by telephone between 25<sup>th</sup> February and 21<sup>st</sup> March 2014 which, added to the 72 BME interviews from the 2013 mainstage, makes a total BME sample of 1,074.

## General

- Where results do not sum to 100%, this may be due to multiple responses, computer rounding or the exclusion of don't knows/not stated.
- Results are based on all respondents unless otherwise stated.
- An asterisk (\*) represents a value of less than one half or one percent, but not zero.

# Summary of findings

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- The following represents some of the highlights in the 2014 BME Booster Survey compared to the 2013 and 2012 surveys and the 2014 mainstage survey among the wider population.

## Registration

- The overwhelming majority of BMEs (88%) remain confident about knowing how to go about registering to vote. This figure remains generally consistent with previous years (2013: 88%; 2012: 86%) and also with the wider population (89%). Confidence is highest among the following ethnic groups: Chinese (95%), Mixed (94%), black Caribbean (92%) and Indian (91%). In contrast, confidence is lowest among: Pakistani (86%), Asian other (86%), Black other (86%), Black African (85%) and Bangladeshi (84%).
- Nine in ten (91%) BMEs state that their name is on the electoral register (where they are living now or somewhere else). This figure is unchanged from last year (89%) but remains lower than the overall population (95%). Indian people and those from a mixed ethnic background (98% and 96% respectively) are most likely to be registered whereas Chinese people (70%) are least likely to be registered.
- Among BMEs whose name is not on the electoral register, the most common reasons cited for not being registered is that they have just moved property (40% compared to 39% total population), that they are not eligible for reasons other than age (22% compared to 11%), or that they haven't got round to it (11% compared to 14%).
- Of those who are registered to vote, the main reason cited for deciding to register was that it is important to vote and have a say/you can't complain if you don't vote (38% compared to 55% total population). Other popular reasons include the right for people to exercise their democratic rights (17%) and in order to get the right candidate/ party in (8%).
- Over three-quarters (78%) of BMEs are satisfied with the system of registering to vote. This figure has increased following a dip in 2013 (73%) and returns to the level recorded in 2012 (77%). There has been a 7 point percentage increase in the proportion of BMEs who are 'very satisfied' with the system of registering to vote over the past year (up from 32% to 39%). The percentage of BMEs who are satisfied with the system of registering to vote is consistent with the general population (78%). Those from a Pakistani (75%), Bangladeshi (76%) and Chinese (76%) ethnic background are least satisfied.
- Of those who were *dissatisfied* with the system of registering to vote in Great Britain/Northern Ireland, the main reasons cited amongst BMEs are that it is difficult/ confusing (45% compared to 38% total population), that people do not know where they can get information about the process of registering to vote (34% compared to 44% total population) and that it is inconvenient (15% compared to 9%).
- Among BMEs who are not 'very satisfied' with the system for registering to vote, three quarters (74%) say that tightening the system further against fraud or abuse would increase their satisfaction with the process. This proportion is marginally lower than it was in 2013 (77%) but is in line with the wider population (75%). Seven in ten BMEs (70%) say that making registering to vote easier and quicker would increase their satisfaction with the process. While this figure is considerably lower than it was in 2013 (78%), it remains slightly higher than among the wider population (67%).
- BMEs are less confident than the wider population that their own details are held securely (62% compared to 69% total population) or that other voters' personal details are held securely (63%

compared to 68%). The evidence suggests that Asian people are more confident than other ethnic groups, especially those from a mixed ethnic background, about both measures.

- Just under three in five BMEs (57%) are confident that the system prevents people who should not be on the register from registering to vote. This figure mirrors the finding a year ago (55%) and the picture among the general population (58%). Confidence is generally consistent across all ethnic groups except among Chinese people where it is lower than average (45%).
- A large majority (90%) of BMEs are confident that their registration details on the electoral register are accurate and correct. The corresponding figure among people in general is 94%. Overall confidence that their registration details are accurate and correct remains the same as it was 2013 (90%), however in 2014 more BMEs are much likely to say they are 'very confident' compared to the previous survey (57% versus 50%). Again, confidence is high across all ethnic groups except among Chinese people (77%).
- Of the nine per cent of BMEs who said they were not very confident/not at all confident that their details on the electoral register are accurate and correct, the most popular reasons stated for this lack of confidence are lack of efficiency/accuracy (29% compared to 11% total population), that details are not updated/change of address not acknowledged (27% compared to 22%) and details might not be secure/safe/confidential (26% among both BMEs and the population as a whole).
- Nearly half (46%) of BMEs who are registered to vote are registered for a postal vote, considerably higher than the wider population (35%). The proportion of BMEs registered for a postal vote has increased significantly from 2012 (39%) and remains in line with the 2013 figure (47%). Among BMEs overall, two in five (41%) are registered for a postal vote.
- While close to half of BMEs are registered to vote, this figure masks great variation among different ethnic groups. People from an Indian (50%), Pakistani (53%) and Other Asian background (55%) are most likely to be registered for a postal vote while the reverse is true for Bangladeshis (39%) and Black Caribbean people (37%).
- The electoral register is currently available for sale although people have the ability to opt-out if they wish to do so. Were the ability to prevent personal details from being sold no longer available, nearly half of BMEs (44%) say they would be less likely to register. This is considerably lower than in 2013 (56%) and also slightly lower than the overall population (49%).
- A third (34%) of BMEs agree that the way UK residents register to vote has recently changed. This is 7 percentage points higher than the wider population (27%).

## Voting process

- In the same way that BMEs (90%) are confident they know how to register to vote, most also say they are confident in knowing how to cast their vote (89%). This measure is consistent with the 2013 finding and with that of the wider population. Confidence is high across the board although is marginally lower among Bangladeshis (83%), Black Africans (83%)
- Seven in ten BMEs (71%) are confident that elections are well run in Great Britain/Northern Ireland (of which only 27% are very confident and 45% are fairly confident). This figure is considerably higher than the population overall where 65 per cent are confident that elections are well run (of which only 20% are 'very' and 45% are 'fairly'). It is important to note, however, that confidence amongst the overall population has fallen 10-percentage points since 2013 (75%). Confidence ranges from a high of 81% among Indians to a low of 57% among Black Caribbean people.
- Respondents who are not very confident that elections are well run were asked which of a number of different scenarios would improve their confidence in elections being well run. Top of the list is increasing security when counting, storing and transporting ballot boxes (76% compared

to 67% total population), followed closely by providing more information on how the voting process works (72% compared to 66%) and people showing photo-ID when they cast a vote (69% compared to 63%).

- Nearly six in ten of BMEs (57%) say that they always vote at General Elections. This figure is considerably lower than the overall population (64%), however it has steadily increased over the past two years (2013: 55%; 2012: 53%). BMEs are more likely to say that they sometimes vote at General Elections compared to the wider population (24% versus 21%). However, claimed turnout is lower among Black people (47%) than it is among those from a Mixed or Asian ethnic group (67% and 61% respectively).
- Seven in ten BMEs (71%) say that they are satisfied with the actual voting process at elections (30% very satisfied, 41% fairly satisfied), consistent with the overall population. One in ten BMEs (11%) say they are dissatisfied with the actual voting process at elections (compared to 9% total population).
- Of those BMEs who said that they were *dissatisfied* with the actual process of voting in Great Britain/Northern Ireland, the main reasons cited were issues to do with the actual voting system (37% compared to 31% total population) and with the ease/convenience of voting (22% compared to 15% of total population). BMEs were less likely to be dissatisfied due to politicians/the political system compared to total population (10% versus 19%).

## Integrity of elections

- Just under half of BMEs (47%) say they have either a lot (11%) or a little (36%) understanding of electoral fraud. This figure is consistent with the overall population (47%). Over half of BMEs (52%) however say they know hardly anything (29%) or nothing (23%) about electoral fraud. This figure is again consistent with the wider population (52%). While understanding of electoral fraud is high among Indians and Pakistanis (54% and 56%), it is considerably lower among those from a Black Caribbean (44%), Bangladeshi (37%), Mixed (38%) and Chinese (32%) ethnic background.
- Just under half of BMEs (44%) think electoral fraud is a problem in the UK, with 15% saying that they think it is a 'very big' problem and 29% saying they think it is a 'fairly big' problem. This figure is slightly lower than it was in 2013 (46%) although it is considerably higher than in 2012 (34%). It is also higher than the overall population (40%). Concern about electoral fraud is consistent across all ethnic groups.
- Among BMEs polling station voting is considered to be safer from fraud and abuse than postal voting is (76% versus 55%), a perception uniformly held across all ethnic groups. This view is again consistent with the view of the overall population where more consider polling station voting to be safe from fraud and abuse than voting by post (79% compared to 56%).
- Three quarters of BMEs (76%) think that registering to vote is safe from fraud or abuse. This figure has steadily decreased among BMEs over the past two years (2013: 77%; 2012: 81%) and is lower than among the wider population (78%).
- Over a third (37%) of BMEs have seen stories in the media about electoral fraud or abuse. This figure is consistent with the overall population (37%). Considerably more BMEs (18%) have heard about electoral fraud happening from someone they know compared to the wider population (9%). One in twenty BMEs (5%) say they have had first-hand experience of seeing electoral fraud (compared to 3% of the overall population).
- BME views regarding electoral fraud tend to be slightly more sceptical than that of the wider population. BMEs (15%) are considerably more likely than the wider population (6%) to say that electoral fraud is very common where they live, or that in the past they had little or no choice about who to vote for because of pressure from people they know (12% compared to 6% total

population). On the other hand, BMEs are just as likely as people in general to say that they would know how to report electoral fraud (34% compared to 33%) and to think there are sufficient safeguards to prevent electoral fraud (46% and 48% respectively).

- Despite some scepticism towards electoral fraud, generally speaking BMEs, like the wider population, accept that most counter measures presented in the survey would be effective in dealing with electoral fraud. Four in five (81%) say that being required to show some photo ID would be effective (compared to 81% total population). Four in five BMEs (80%) also think that having independent observers in all polling stations would be useful in dealing with electoral fraud (compared to 70% total population). Three quarters of BMEs (74%) say that stopping parties and party workers handling postal vote applications and ballot papers would be an effective measure (compared to 69% total population), and nearly three quarters (72%) think making people sign to check their identity before voting in polling stations would work (compared to 69% total population).

## Party finance

- Knowledge about how parties are funded in order to fight elections is lower amongst BMEs than the wider population. Just over a third of BMEs (36%) say they know a lot or a little about political party finance compared to 44 per cent of the total population. Nearly two thirds of BMEs (62%) say they know nothing/nothing at all about it, compared to 55 per cent of the wider population. BME knowledge towards how parties are funded to fight elections remains in keeping with results from 2013 (Know a lot/little: 35%; Know hardly/nothing at all: 63%).
- Four in ten BMEs (39%) are confident that the authorities will 'take action' if political donations or spending rules are broken (issues around MPs expenses having been excluded with a question prompt) and 57 per cent of BMEs are not confident. This is consistent with the views of the wider population (where 41% are confident and 57% are not confident).
- Just over a quarter of BMEs (27%), believe the funding of political parties in the UK is open and transparent. This view is in line with the general population (26%) and remains stable with results amongst BMEs from 2013 (28%).
- Three in ten BMEs (29%) agree that the spending of political parties and candidates at UK elections is open and transparent. Again this view is consistent with the wider population (28%), however this is slightly less positive than it was in 2013 where 31 per cent of BMEs agreed that the spending on political parties and candidates is open and transparent.

# Topline results

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