



COST OF LIVING RESEARCH

*The Impact of the Cost-of-Living Crisis on Physical Activity Provision
in Adults Aged 30+ from Black African, Black Caribbean, Arab, South
Asian, East Asian, and Mixed Communities*

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Research Objectives

1. To gain a deeper understanding of the cost-of-living crisis's impact on ethnically diverse groups, specifically those within Black African, Black Caribbean, Arab, South Asian, East Asian, and Mixed communities, who are aged 30 and above.
2. To better comprehend the cost-of-living crisis's impact on Associate Member organisations that serve ethnically diverse communities.



Methodology

- Literature Review
- Participants (Focus Groups) *Inclusion Criteria: The study was limited to participants aged 30 and above, belonging specifically to Black African, Black Caribbean, Arab, South Asian, East Asian, and Mixed communities.*
- Pulse Survey - conducted via telephone in March 2023 to 25 Sporting Equals Associate Member organisations.

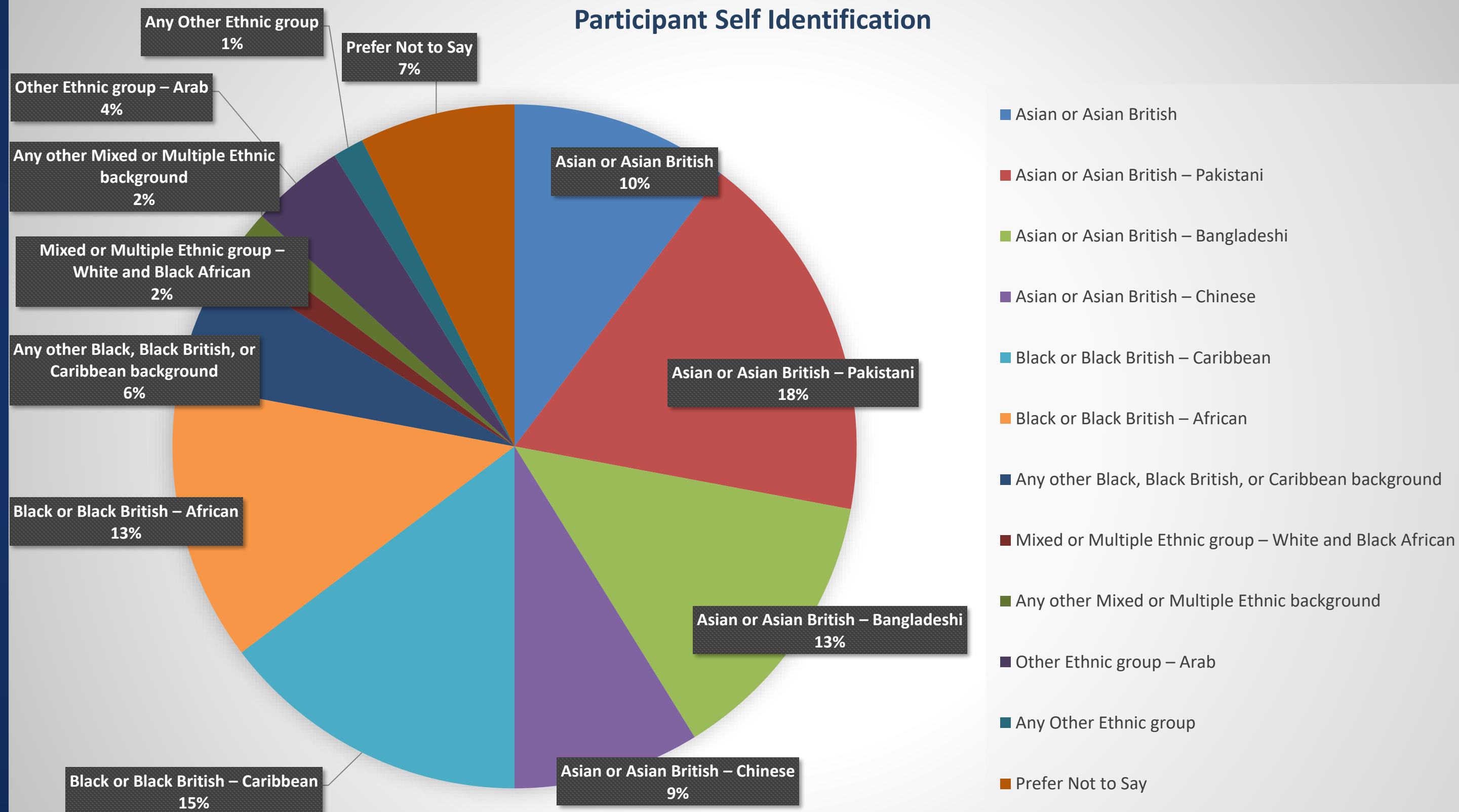


A total of 68 participants were engaged in the research from the following groups (47 Female and 21 Male)

- *Al-Hilal Regeneration CIC*
- *Better We*
- *Black Trail Runners*
- *Caribbean & African Health Network (CAHN)*
- *Club Ekta*
- *Community Revival UK*
- *eBony Hikers*
- *Idaraya Life CIC*
- *Karmand Community Association*
- *Leamington Khalsa Cricket Club*
- *UK Chinese Women Connect (UKCWC)*



Participant Self Identification



Based on the thematic analysis, three key areas for barriers were identified:

1. **Socioeconomic barriers:** These included the rising costs of living, the need to prioritise basic needs over physical activity, and the additional costs related to participating in physical activities.
2. **Gender-specific barriers:** Female participants specifically noted that they face additional challenges due to societal expectations and gender norms. This included limitations on the types of activities they felt comfortable participating in, and the need for female-only spaces or sessions for certain sports or physical activities.
3. **Cultural barriers:** Participants mentioned cultural norms and expectations, such as the appropriateness of certain types of physical activities for people of their cultural background.



Socio-economic	Gender-specific	Culture-specific
Reduced income and inflation (Prioritisation of necessities: food, clothing, rent, bills use up most of the disposable income; high transportation costs)	Household work/care work burden at home (for women)	Feelings of isolation as an ethnically diverse person and under-representation of ethnically diverse groups
Lack of information and unfamiliar environment (leading to shyness or unwillingness to participate in activities; councils do not provide adequate information and facilities; lack of communication leading to coordination issues with groups)	Safety concerns for women (especially when it is dark)	Age-related stereotypes/racism
Times constraints (increased job hours or undertaking additional part-time jobs to meet the rising expenses)	Period poverty and menopause and poor toilet facilities (for women)	Patriarchy (e.g. women should stay home)
Additional costs for facilities (rising maintenance costs and increased costs of sorts gear)	Cultural conservatism (women, especially Muslim women are uncomfortable mixing with men when taking part in activities)	Social bias, stereotypes, and racism (women get looked at or commented on for dressing differently; anti-Chinese events; anti-mask gestures)
Environment concerns (reduced availability of green spaces and adverse weather conditions)	Lack of staff/facilities and funding (for women)	
	Increased risk of domestic violence and harassment	



"I have to pay for my children's exercise and physical activities such as cricket, so it is difficult for me to spend money on my own exercise and physical activity."

Participant of British Pakistani descent

"When people are facing food poverty, zero hour contracts and mental health issues how are they going to focus on physical activity?"

Participant of Black Caribbean decent

"Times is more important because I need a part-time job to pay my rent and bills."

Participant of Chinese descent



"I am a Muslim woman so I am only comfortable learning swimming from female lifeguards. However, when I went to learn to swim, I couldn't find female trainers although I did ask the authority if I could get a female trainer. Hence, until now, I still don't know how to swim."

Participant of Black African descent



Key Findings - Black Community

Participants from the Black community expressed specific concerns related to their Afro hair, highlighting a challenge in finding appropriate swimming caps. This seemingly simple issue becomes a significant barrier as it leads to difficulties in drying their hair after swimming.

Some Black participants expressed feelings of self-consciousness or withdrawal from certain activities when they did not see people from their own ethnic community involved.

Additionally, the existence of unfounded assumptions and stereotypes about the abilities of Black people to engage in certain activities has led to instances of harassment and bullying across various age groups, including children. These misconceptions only perpetuate racial biases and underscore the need for a more inclusive, respectful, environments.



"There are some assumptions that Black people are not good at this or that. For example, when my son was in primary school, his classmate made a remark that Black people don't know how to swim. Such issues also don't encourage people to go to certain places or take part in activities. Also, for example, if you go to squash clubs, you will find mostly White people and sometimes it's just the silly jokes and remarks that make it a bit of a tricky situation. I think it's a whole society thing rather than a minority thing. People need to be educated to include other people naturally."

- Participant of Black African descent





Key Findings - South Asian Community

For some South Asian women, the traditional role of a homemaker serves as a barrier. However the social aspects are more appealing - the act of communicating with other women, sharing problems, and engaging in collective problem-solving helps them relieve stress and foster a sense of community.

Particularly for women who have recently migrated to the UK after marriage, finding suitable activities and connecting with other women from their communities can be a daunting task. The feeling of isolation can be overwhelming, further exacerbating the challenges of adjusting to life in a new country while their spouses are at work.

'Sometimes we don't know where to go for activities, especially if they have moved to a new place. For example, I am new in this country; I moved here after marriage so I still don't know how to obtain information about physical activities.'

- Participant of Indian descent



Key Findings - Chinese Community

The Chinese community has been particularly affected by anti-gestures during lockdown, which have created an atmosphere of fear and apprehension. Although the frequency of such events has reduced, racism towards the Chinese community persists. Some participants shared harrowing accounts of continued verbal abuse and microaggressions, both in public spaces and online.

These experiences have created a barrier to participation in physical activities, community events, and even daily life routines for some individuals. The lingering effects of such incidents have led to mistrust and feelings of isolation within the community.

There is a clear need for broader societal change to create an inclusive environment, as well as targeted support and resources for the Chinese community. Efforts could include public education campaigns to dispel stereotypes, the promotion of cultural awareness, and stricter enforcement against racial discrimination.

"During Covid, there were some anti-Chinese events, so we were afraid of being attacked which prevented us from taking part in sports or public events. Although this racism has reduced, it is still there."

- Participant of Chinese descent



Key Findings - Arab Community

Both male and female participants from the Arab community expressed a strong preference for single-sex provisions, particularly for activities like swimming. This need largely stems from their cultural and religious beliefs, which discourages mixed-gender activities.

Participants reported discontinuing activities when they are not segregated by gender. They further mentioned that while separate facilities do exist in certain areas, they are scarce and often insufficient to cater to their community's needs.

Women participants highlighted the need for safe and private spaces where they can comfortably dress and remove headscarves. Some participants felt that service providers sometimes lack understanding or sensitivity towards their cultural norms and requirements.

"I prefer to stay home as I home-school my kids. I enjoy doing this for my children. However, this leaves me no time for myself to exercise. And activities are not available at the times I am free such as during school hours in the morning."

- Participant of Arab descent



Associate Member Feedback

Participants representing Associate Member organisations voiced concerns about the escalating maintenance costs for their facilities.

Keeping pace with these rising expenses amidst the cost-of-living crisis and the growing membership in community organisations has proven to be difficult.

Certain equipment and amenities are being underutilised, further diminishing their value.

The hike in utility costs, is leading to cost increases being passed on to consumers. This situation stresses the need for supplementary financial assistance for sports clubs, leisure centres and similar establishments.



“How can parents who cannot afford to buy sports gear afford to send their children to take part in sports? Lets say you pay £5 a session and you have 3 session a week, that adds up to £60 per month, At that rate, many kids are forced to drop out even if they participated before, as they can't afford, subscriptions, gear and weekly fees”.

Participant, British Pakistani Decent



Conclusion

Different ethnic communities, including Black, South Asian, Chinese, and Arab, have specific challenges, ranging from hair concerns, migration struggles, racism, cultural conservatism, and single-sex provision needs. Understanding and addressing these nuances require targeted strategies that take into account the unique characteristics of each community.

The findings emphasises that there is no one-size-fits-all solution.

Collaboration between government agencies, national governing bodies, sports clubs and community/faith based organisations, is key to making service provision more accessible.



Recommendations

Cultural awareness, training, investment in facilities, flexible scheduling, community outreach, and subsidies may alleviate some of the barriers identified.

A more empathetic, flexible, and community-driven approach is required to foster an environment where sport and physical activity are accessible and appealing to all, regardless of gender, age, or ethnic background.

Continued research and dialogue with communities, coupled with actionable policies, can transform the landscape of sport and physical activity, making it a more equitable and engaging space for everyone.

