Executive Summary

Co-designing Effective Anti-Racism Policy Infrastructure

Using participatory action research methods to engage with racially minoritised communities about the proposed Anti-Racism Observatory for Scotland

September 2023

Contents

Using participatory action research methods to engage with racially minoritised communities about the proposed Anti-Racism Observatory for Scotland

This summary reflects on the key approaches, tasks and findings of this community research. The overall aim was to build awareness that new anti racism infrastructure was being developed, hear from people about how the infrastructure could best work for them and, in doing so, support the ambitions for co-design of Scotland's new anti-racism policy infrastructure – the Anti Racism Observatory for Scotland (AROS).

The research focused mainly on structural racism and the resultant racialised inequity in outcomes, not on people's lived experiences of racism. The full report provides detailed documentation of our approach and reflects on our learning.

Why did we do this work?

— Anti-racism policy infrastructure needs to be co-designed with racially minoritised communities in Scotland to engender genuine, long-term change for communities affected by racism.

— The Anti-racism Interim Governance Group (AIGG) commissioned this research to engage with racially minoritised people across Scotland and hear their perspectives about the proposed AROS.

— We used participatory action research (PAR) because it centres diverse voices, challenges structural racism and catalyses policy change. We wanted to co-create actionable evidence for policy change with communities to increase accountability and uphold the belief that those impacted by racial inequity have significant goodwill and relevant expertise to inform solutions.

How did we do this work?

This research aimed to embody key principles of safety, trustworthiness, collaboration and empowerment when working with minoritised communities. We invested substantial effort and time to ensure research materials were both relevant and accessible to diverse racially minoritised people to promote a shared understanding about the research. We tried our best to be transparent about the scope and potential outcomes of the research to maintain trust. Given the high risk of inequitable power dynamics, we also invited feedback from community members in real time at each stage of the research. This feedback was invaluable in helping us amend our approach to minimise harm and encourage optimal engagement.

There were three phases, which followed the principles of community engagement and PAR:

— **Phase 1: The aim of this phase was to co-design the study with communities, and identify optimal mechanisms of engagement. We wanted to build trust, boost community ownership of the research and avoid retraumatising participants.**

   We co-designed a study questionnaire and capacity-building materials with community leaders, young people, and members of the AIGG over a number of cycles. Based on the feedback we received, we created a video and a flyer explaining why we were carrying out the research, how it was different from previous initiatives and what difference it would make. It took more than four months to ensure clarity in the wording for these materials. We translated the capacity building materials into various community languages to ensure our materials were accessible.

   We used online unstructured interviews with community leaders to establish how best to engage with people in their communities. We held focus group meetings with young people with experience of anti-racism practice. We regularly reviewed our study design at meetings with a subgroup of the AIGG with community engagement expertise.

— Phase 2: The aim of this phase was to encourage racially minoritised people across Scotland to participate in our research by using an intersectional approach and limiting gatekeeping,

Multiple community and third sector organisations, including national and local "race" equality focused organisations, were approached to engage in this research and share participation opportunities through their networks. Participation opportunities were shared publicly (online) for individuals and organisation to take part. The full engagement process is detailed on page 7 of the full report.

We distributed the co-designed online survey across Scotland through email communication with community organisations and community researchers. 531 people from across Scotland participated in the survey. Most of the responses were from individuals, and some respondents stated they were answering on behalf of organisations.

We also facilitated listening sessions in partnership with community organisations in five cities (Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Inverness). These sessions allowed community members to provide input verbally and through discussion with their peers. We took care to assess and address potential limitations to participation at these sessions, such as the selection of an appropriate venue, and the provision of refreshments and childcare. We had upfront discussions with community partners about resourcing for these sessions, including payment for their time and expertise.

— Phase 3: The aim of this phase was to accurately represent participants and increase transparency in how themes are identified during analysis by providing impactful evidence to influence policymakers.

We conducted collaborative data analysis with AIGG members with lived expertise on racism. We encouraged those involved to reflect on how their experiences shaped their interpretation of the data. By making sense of the data collaboratively, we aimed to validate lived experiences and counter dominant narratives of "objectivity" that perpetuate racism. We used direct quotations from participants when analysing the data to capture emotions and meaning often lost in paraphrasing, especially around sensitive topics like racism.

When using the data to inform recommendations, we spoke directly about what our research participants wanted. We wanted to counter deficit framings by positioning adversely racialised community members as experts on addressing racism.

Challenges: The main challenges we encountered during the research included the lack of human resources for community capacity-building about the upcoming anti-racism policy infrastructure and the terminology used. There was limited time for conducting participatory data analysis. Given the lack of institutional memory, we also encountered significant research fatigue within minoritised communities.

Outcome

531 people participated in the survey. Responses were from a wide range of areas in Scotland. Listening tours in 5 different cities were run. 78% of survey responses were from individuals, and 22% of respondents stated they were answering on behalf of organisations. People's wellbeing, community safety, community strengths, religion, disability and caring responsibilities, and inequities faced by sexual minorities were highlighted. This suggests community members would like to see work on racism and anti-racism conducted across all these sectors, with the AROS acting as a central, accessible platform for sharing information.

1. ## Standardised data collection

   Standardised data collection on racism and anti-racism should be embedded within institutions and organisations instead of being entrusted to a single entity. This information should be easily accessible to community members through the AROS.

   Research participants reported that the AROS should map work on racism and anti-racism across the whole range of listed areas, from employment, school education, higher education, housing and immigration to business, health, children's and older people's wellbeing, community safety, community strengths, religion, disability and caring responsibilities, and inequities faced by sexual minorities. This suggests community members would like to see work on racism and anti-racism conducted across all these sectors, with the AROS acting as a central, accessible platform for sharing information.

2. ## An integrated approach

   The impact of structural racism should be incorporated into impact assessments and emergency preparedness in the public sector. When asked about areas of focus respondents stated that AROS should map work on racism and antiracism across the whole range of listed areas. 47% of respondents requested consideration on employment, 44% school education, 41% higher education, 40% housing and 39 immigration. Additional areas highlighted for the AROS' consideration included COVID and its impact, the cost of living crisis and its impact, poverty, the justice system, popular culture, language, media narratives, sports, the environment, public places and legal representation.

3. **Valuing lived experience**

   There is a clear demand from community members for the AROS to value research, lived experiences and anti-racism efforts happening within communities, outside institutional walls. Most respondents wanted the AROS to highlight community research on racism and anti-racism, and for their work on racism and anti-racism to be included by the AROS.

   Participants also stated that the AROS should bring communities together, and engage with community members through the creation of safe spaces for dialogue.

4. **Acknowledging and valuing community expertise**

   The skills and expertise within communities should be acknowledged and valued. Respondents highlighted the utility of a live database of community groups in the anti-racism space. Participants also mentioned the importance of monitoring the allocation of public sector and philanthropic funding (e.g. grants) to community organisations led by racially minoritised people. During our research, we recognised the importance of uplifting community members with specific skills (e.g. academics of colour) in anti-racism policymaking spaces.

5. **Focus on accountability**

   In the study a lack of accountability, limitations of current data availability and limited capacity for addressing racialised issues emerged as key themes. The community research highlighted that barrier to addressing racism included the lack of follow-up after the initiation of an inquiry into racism, the amount of work required to provide "concrete" evidence of racism, and the lack of capacity (e.g. time, resources and funding) to address racism.

6. **Building better understanding**

   Community members wanted the AROS to focus on building racial literacy.

   A number of topics were mentioned, including bystander training, colourism, privilege and power, unlearning racism, internalised racism, internalised colourism, mechanisms of racialisation, the effects of racism including unintentional harm and perceptions of racially minoritised communities. There is also a need for work to consolidate existing research on racism and anti-racism in a clear way, and to facilitate further research (e.g. data disaggregation, collecting lived experiences of racism), signposting anti-racism activities, and setting and enforcing standards of anti-racism practice.

7. A repository

Community members expressed the need for a public accessible interactive repository of research and public policy concerning racism and anti-racism to maintain institutional memory and avoid wasting resources. Respondents expressed fatigue in relation to being extensively researched and a desire for existing findings on racism and anti-racism to be brought together for decisive action.

Respondents mentioned the collation and sharing of a variety of research, including research on lived experiences of racism, and policy-oriented research. Participants felt that the evidence arising from new reporting mechanisms to address racism could generate a body of live anti-racism casework.

8. Quality standards on anti-racism

Community members wanted the AROS to be involved in setting and enforcing standards of anti-racism practice. A number of mechanisms were proposed, including calling out racist behaviour, sharing best practices, setting targets, monitoring the achievement of targets, and helping to embed anti-racism practices in institutions.

9. Direct involvement and equitable inclusion

Community members indicated a desire to be directly involved with the work of the AROS. Respondents suggested community members could be involved as educators, researchers, recruiters for research, and as community liaisons spreading awareness about the AROS. The need for transparency around payment for the work done by community members was emphasised.

Respondents also stated that the AROS should bring communities together and engage with community members through the creation of safe spaces for dialogue.

10. Clear and sustained communication

The AROS should maintain a sustainable programme of communication with communities about its purpose and work. Participants highlighted the importance of raising awareness specifically among those "at risk of racial discrimination".

Although we used multiple avenues to publicise our capacity-building materials and survey, most participants had heard of our survey through on-the-ground community researchers. As such, the AROS should consider multiple channels of communication, including the use of community liaisons in places where people gather.

This summary outlines our approach to engaging with adversely racialised communities in Scotland about the AROS. It highlights challenges and key recommendations for the AROS which have emerged directly from the lived expertise of community members. The research offers a starting point for ongoing reflection with communities when designing, implementing and evaluating anti-racism policy and practice. For a more detailed account of our methods and learning, please access the full report linked here.