Experiences of accessing folk singing in England

Fay Hield[1]
Esbjörn Wettermark
Kirsty Kay
University of Sheffield

Abstract: Folk singing in England today is dominated by people in a narrow demographic profile. Calls from within the folk scene for increased diversity have not yielded change. Existing literature suggests solutions from within the practice, but lacks insight into the perspectives of marginalised people and non-participants. Learning how to increase and diversify participation in folk singing is the Access Folk project's goal. Stage one sought to understand where we are now, through the eyes of participants and non-participants, to ascertain the adaptations needed to facilitate their involvement. We have engaged with over a thousand people through four data collection projects: a survey, extended focus groups, a peer interview scheme, and artistic research. These findings will be used in stage two to develop potential solutions. Despite a desire for inclusivity, barriers persist, including events tailored to specific preferences and a lack of knowledge from non-singers about the activities and from organisers about the needs of those they want to attract. While many people feel accepted, both insiders and outsiders view the folk scene as potentially unwelcoming or unsafe for certain groups, highlighting a contradiction between the desire for diversity and existing structural or ideological limitations. Recognising and addressing these factors will be crucial for increasing accessibility and diversity in folk singing activities.

Keywords: *folk singing; access; diversity; participatory research*

Introduction

The number of folk singers in England has declined significantly from the 1960s folk revival.[2] British folk clubs have experienced personnel and practice stagnating (MacKinnon, 1993). Despite ongoing calls to attract more, specifically younger, people (e.g. Martin, 2020), there is little indication that many newcomers are entering organised folk singing. With increased devolution post 1990s, followed by Brexit and growing discussions around colonialism and empire on culture

[1] The Access Folk project explores ways of increasing and diversifying participation in folk singing in England. It is funded through UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship (MR/V023837/1) running 2022-2027 at the University of Sheffield. Fay Hield leads the project. She is Professor of Music combining audience research, ethnomusicology and artistic research as an academic, a practising performer and as director of Soundpost, a community music organisation. Esbjörn Wettermark is a Research Associate on the project. He has researched and worked with folk and traditional music in the UK, Sweden and Vietnam. With a background in music education and arts management, he has a particular interest in issues around cultural policy and intangible cultural heritage. Kirsty Kay is a researcher and editor. was a research associate on the project 2022–2024. She is co-founder of The Editing Cooperative, which seeks to provide equitable writing support in academic publishing.

[2] In this project we define public folk singing activities as 'live singing events that are open to the public and involve communal engagement but which are not primarily part of an act of worship' (https://accessfolk.sites.sheffield.ac.uk/about).

and national identities, many now question what Englishness is and how to positively connect with their cultural identity (Baker, 2023). For folk singing to remain relevant, new singers and enthusiasts must engage with both the repertoires and the meaning of a shared English identity. The Access Folk research project is exploring ways to increase and diversify participation in folk singing in England, aiming to understand:

- What is the place of folk singing in contemporary England?
- How do people want to engage with English cultural traditions through song?
- How can we facilitate participation in folk singing in England?

Entry to England's folk scene is typically through existing relationships (Hield and Crossley, 2014). Participants acquire and reaffirm a sense of social and communal identity through the music event (Wilby, 2013). The skills to participate well within folk singing contexts are gained through incremental learning within informal participation (Hield, 2013). The folk club is the main venue for organised folk singing in England and there is variation in how clubs state what music may be performed and how the performance context is structured (Hield and Mansfield, 2019). These elements contribute to a complicated process for 'outsiders' to engage with folk singing, which favours a narrow participant demographic.

A lack of diversity has been acknowledged within the scene. Core organisations are addressing this, such as the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS) (Spicer, 2021) , the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library (2021), and Sound Roots (2020). Additionally, musicians have publicly discussed gender imbalances (Newton, 2019) and racialised experience (Bashiru, n.d.). Academic work recognises that participants and organisations are open to change and are largely willing to adapt to new contexts and modes of transmission (Gayraud, 2016). Although musicians see tradition as living, music journalism tends to represent them as creatures of 'pastness and nostalgia' (Karjalainen, 2018: 72). While a liberal 'Englishness' might be the norm within the scene, this is perhaps unapparent to outsiders.

The literature problematises contemporary folk singing in England from within; we do not currently know how those uninvolved might want to engage, what adaptations might facilitate their participation, or how integrating different kinds of people might impact the experiences of existing singers. The article addresses these questions.

Methodology and methods

Participatory research involves those potentially affected by it (see Vaughn and Jaquez, 2020). Access Folk is built on participatory research principles with folk scene operatives as key decision-makers about investigation direction and methods.

Access Folk began in February 2022 with one project lead, two research associates, one project manager, one communications officer and an advisory board. EFDSS and English Folk Expo staff advised on project design, also endorsing the funding application. Community participant recruitment has developed through the project lead's existing academic/performer networks and public calls. This article marks the end of stage one, wherein we have attempted to identify issues in accessing folk singing in England. These findings have been taken forward by the Access Folk advisory board to inform how we test potential solutions through a period of action research in stage two (2024–2027). The following activities provided the datasets referenced herein. Due to space, discussion of findings is condensed. Further reports and datasets are referenced where available:

- Advisory Board, June 2022–ongoing: 13 members recruited via invitation and open call. They represent key organisations, organisers, singers and include a range of backgrounds and marginalised lived experiences. They have helped guide the research questions and design methods for wide accessibility.
- Consulting Groups, March–July 2022: We ran a series of open online discussions: 52 people with lived or professional experience, or an interest, met several times through six themed groups (Belief, Politics and Religion; Disability; Gender and Sexuality; Race and Ethnicity; Age; and Class and Socio-Economic background). Three additional focus groups were conducted on race, ethnicity and age, plus further input from affected individuals re: socio-economic background. Group members co-produced outputs including a report (Butler et al., 2023) and podcast series (Bones et al., 2023).
- Artistic Research, February–October 2022: 1 professional artist reflected on 'Englishness' in their music making, involving 14 associated artists and organisers. Outputs include a poster (Hield, 2023a) and interim report (Hield, 2023b).
- Ask A Friend, August–December 2022: Insiders were invited to interview a non-folk singing friend/relative about their experiences/attitudes toward folk singing. 22 peer interviewers conducted 61 interviews. The results were co-analysed, yielding a poster (Porter et al., 2023) and reports (Wettermark, 2023; Gordon et al., 2024).
- Folk Singing Symposium, February 2023: 47 presenters and 40 participants attended. Academics, singers and organisers discussed performance, participation and inclusion in folk singing internationally (see Hield and Grindley, 2025).
- Survey, April–June 2023: 886 people responded to an online survey gathering[3] quantitative and qualitative information about folk singers' and organisers' demographics and experiences (Kay, 2023; Kay, 2024).
- Knowledge exchange, April 2023–March 2024: 14 people from 7 folk music organisations across Europe exchanged knowledge to increase and diversify folk music participation (Wettermark and Kay, 2024).
- Participatory research method training May–July 2022; April–July 2023: Representatives from 5 English folk arts organisations explored how to help academics and music industry operatives to produce joint research (Hield et al., 2022). A second project developed an education resource with cross career academics producing guidance for early career researchers and a case study on initiating participatory research with Romani and Traveller groups (Kay and Wettermark, 2023)

This wide range of datasets comprise qualitative and quantitative findings. Some provide deeply detailed personal experiences, others map trends across the country.

Who are folk singers and what do they do?

The first research phase involved establishing what the contemporary scene for folk singing in England looks like. The last comprehensive survey was undertaken by MacKinnon (1993) in the late 1980s. Our research questions expanded on MacKinnon's to answer not only who participates and how, but also why.

The almost 900 survey responses suggest that singers largely comprise the same group that MacKinnon found around 35 years ago. Characteristic traits shared between respondents then and now include: heterosexual, (now) aged over 60, as likely to be a woman as a man, white and

[3] See appendix for a list of the questions which are referred to by number throughout the article.

English, non-disabled, identify as middle class, have an undergraduate or postgraduate degree, have no religion, vote Labour, and consider themselves to be somewhat politically engaged.[4]

Our respondents are likelier to be white (96.7%) than the general England/Wales population (81.7%).[5] The majority state they are heterosexual/straight (84.7%), lower than the general population (89.4%)[6]. Folk singing is not necessarily more attractive to LGBTQ+ people; rather, our findings align with other research suggesting that LGBTQ+ people are likelier arts/culture participants than the general population (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2023; see also Lewis and Seaman, 2004). More of our respondents are disabled (26%) than the general population (17.7%).[7] However, this could be impacted by respondents being overwhelmingly older than the general population, hence more likely to be disabled (Kirk-Wade, 2023). 61% of respondents are 60+ whereas 18.6% of the population are over 65 (Office for National Statistics [ONS], 2022a). MacKinnon's description of the folk scene as 'ageing' remains valid (MacKinnon 1993 p.43).

Regarding participation, three-quarters of survey respondents sing at folk clubs, closely followed by folk festivals. We expected folk and community choirs to feature heavily too. From a nationwide survey, we know that choir singing was incredibly popular before the pandemic, with 2.14 million singers estimated UK-wide (Voices Now, 2017). 'Folk/Traditional' music was among the most popular repertoire reported by choirs (ibid, p.8); nevertheless, our respondents were least likely to attend folk choirs (17.5%). However, a different picture emerges when age groups are broken down.[8] Older people are much likelier to attend folk clubs,[9] younger people are much likelier to attend folk festivals than their older counterparts.[10] Middle-aged people are more likely to attend folk choirs.[11]

More men than women or trans/non-binary people attend folk clubs and singarounds. Heterosexual/straight people are likelier than LGBTQ+ counterparts to attend folk clubs. Although there are almost equal male (49.2%) and female (47.5%) respondents, women are more likely than men to be younger, disabled or LBQ.[12] Heterosexual women and LGBTQ+ people report similar negative experiences such as being overlooked or feeling unwelcome or unsafe.[13] Both groups talked about being in spaces dominated by a masculinity culture, resulting in reduced singing opportunities. Age also affects how respondents experience the folk scene where 22.7% experienced a barrier to participating in a folk singing event, which rose to 47.7% of 18–40-year-olds:

> I sometimes feel uncomfortable attending evening events in pubs on my own as a woman, particularly if I don't know in advance that I will know anyone there. There is the risk of being harassed or feeling unsafe in the pub, and the risk of travelling home alone late at night. (Survey, Female, Disabled, 32)

[4] Based on Qs 44, 45, 53, 52, 48, 47, 54, 57, 58, and MacKinnon (1993, pp 42-50).
[5] Based on Q53 and Office for National Statistics (2022b).
[6] Based on Q46 and Office for National Statistics (2023a).
[7] Based on Q56 and Office for National Statistics (2023b).
[8] We have broken down the ages into three groups to find some general differences between generations: 18–34 – young adults; 35–54 – middle-aged adults; 55–84 – older adults.
[9] Folk club attendance: 18-40 63%; middle-aged 62.6%; older 83.4%. Based on Q2.
[10] Folk festival attendance: 18-40 82%; middle-aged 76.4%; older 69.4%. Based on Q2.
[11] Folk choir attendance: 18-40 15%; middle-aged 23.1%; older 15.4%. Based on Q2.
[12] 62% of 18–40 are women; 31% of women are disabled, compared to 20.7% of men; 17.7% of women, compared to 8.4% of men are LBQ or unsure of their sexuality. Based on Qs 44, 46 and 56.
[13] Based on Qs 37 and 38.

> Disability due to not having access to seating (struggle with standing). Neurodivergence with not being able to duck out (due to tight crowding in) if sensory overwhelm becomes too much. Strict male/female roles as a non-binary person. (Survey, Non-binary/Third gender, Disabled, 30)

Age is a barrier to both older and younger respondents. Both groups note feeling excluded by the other generation, not experiencing an intergenerational scene, and age-related cliques. For example, compare these statements by two male respondents:

> Was snubbed by the organiser of a singaround at [folk festival], despite having turned up early and put my name on the list first. He called on all his friends and acquaintances and ignored my group. I believe this was because we were much younger and not part of his circle. (Survey, Male, 44)

> Oddly enough, becoming an old person (65) has had both a negative and a positive effect. If I stick to folk clubs, most sessions … I find I blend in easily. On the festival scene I often find these days that I have achieved a certain kind of invisibility where younger singers and players at sessions and singarounds don't actively invite the 'outsider' to contribute and it would require a certain level of rudeness to try to break into the proceedings... (Survey, Male, 65)

Demographic differences coincide with song choices. Regardless of age, over half the respondents stated they choose songs because they connect them to the past (60%), and because they find it important to preserve for future generations (52.5%).[14] Younger people were, however, likelier to choose songs that connect them to a place:[15]

> Specifically, it feels like I am connecting to my area when I sing songs collected or about it. More widely, Britain, the countryside, small communities who felt a strong bond with each other. (Survey, Female, 40)

Few (12.5%) chose a song because it connected them to a specific ethnic group; those who did largely came from a minority ethnic demographic. Notably, only 9.6% of White UK respondents reported that they may choose a song because it connects them to an ethnic group, with 31% of White Other and 37.5% of Any Other Ethnicity doing so for this reason.[16] This suggests the majority may be unaware of, or non-committal toward, songs' associations with ethnicity or nation, or as our Consulting Groups and artistic research suggest, uncomfortable about potentially nationalist connotations (Butler et al., 2023). Although many folk songs are not ethnicity explicit, that some groups in the folk scene seek out those that are, or that can be construed in a less majority ethnic way, demonstrates the importance of repertoire in place making, as these respondents exemplify:

[14] Based on Q27.
[15] Based on Q27 (18–40 55%, 41–60 48.7%, 61–86 40.7%).
[16] Based on Q27.

> I sing songs that connect me to where my family is from. Our family goes back generations in Cornwall, so it's important to me that I share songs from home. (Survey, Female, 47)

> I'm from the US with Scottish/Irish heritage so I enjoy Appalachian interpretations/ reinventions of folksongs as well as learning the original versions. (Survey, Female, 32)

Organising folk singing

Folk singing in England remains a grassroots activity, with over 60% of our respondents involved in organising events.[17] Like the singers, organisers tend to be older, heterosexual men. However, those with organising experience tend to have different participation preferences to non-organisers – they are more likely to perform professionally or semi-professionally and to lead songs; they prefer singing from the front/onstage, and with instruments, without a score; they are likelier to have started singing as a teenager and regularly attend folk singing events. Younger organisers are more likely to organise events as part of their (self-)employment, while older counterparts (over 60) are likelier volunteers.[18]

Organisers spoke of choosing to organise events from a sense of community and friendship, enjoyment, a desire to share their love of folk music:

> Bringing people together to share/play/listen to songs is one of the most uplifting things I can think of. (Survey, Male, 66)

An interest in heritage also motivated organisers. One explained, 'It's a great tradition and increases knowledge of our ancestry through the creative power of song. The lyrics are often beautifully rich and fun' (Survey, Female, 44). There is also a strong desire to preserve traditional songs to 'guarantee their survival and existence for new generations of folk singers' (Survey, Non-binary/Third gender, 29).

While the community building enthusiasm and music sharing energy is a laudable and recurring reference, volunteer organisers have a tendency to cater to their own interests:

> It's usually a way to show my own songwriting, so I put gigs on for the performance of [that] as well as supporting other folk artists and friends. (Survey, Male, 37)

Organisers are likely to stage activities of interest to people sharing their demographic characteristics.[19] A lack of diversity among organisers results in lacking awareness of the needs and interests of other groups.

Organisers are broadly interested in attracting new folk singers.[20] They recognise dwindling numbers and a scene-wide lack of diversity; however, their activities are focused on their own events, not any scene-wide initiative. Informal isolated initiatives are used, such as 'inviting non-folkies to come in and listen. Some return, some try a song, some bought me a beer!' (Survey, Male, 67), or displaying enthusiasm:

[17] Based on Q16.
[18] Based on Qs 1, 6, 4, 3, 17.
[19] Based on Q2, organisers vs non-organisers responses.
[20] Based on Q23.

> I gently told people about the singing events I go to and when they are and leave it to others to decide if they want to take part. Often people do after some time, as well as after people have seen joyful Instagram content. (Survey, Female, 35)

Some organisers focus on promoting beyond their core audience group, such as 'talks to Women's Institutes, village societies, schools and other heritage groups' (Survey, Female, 76), or going 'door to door a week or so before the workshop, particularly calling in [with] older residents who might remember the carols, but also those who I know sing in choirs outside the village' (Survey, Male, 21).[21] Beyond spreading the word, attempts to improve accessibility of their activities reflect the organisers' lived experiences. Younger, female, trans/non-binary or disabled organisers are likelier to try to improve accessibility than older, male, non-disabled organisers:[22]

> I try to find venues … accessible by all … with ramps, accessible toilets etc. I also try to make sure that people with other less visible forms of disabilities are accommodated. E.g. taking care over Covid precautions, specifically making sure people feel invited to events. (Survey, Trans Female, 36, Disabled)

Younger organisers are also likelier than their older counterparts to consider accessibility beyond physical matters, being conscious of mental health and neurodiversity:

> Purposely chose venues with wheelchair access and made sure that the accessible toilet was always signposted and unlocked… Explicitly made the evenings autism/sensory friendly by providing quiet spaces and generating an environment where any accommodations are … provided when asked and not questioned. (Survey, Non-binary/Third gender, 23)

While younger organisers are considerably likelier than older organisers to provide quiet spaces, break rooms or relaxed performances, only one mentioned considering seating layouts. Older organisers were more likely to ensure 'that the venue is accessible inside and outside. Making sure seats are available for those who cannot stand for long periods of time' (Survey, Female, 73).[23]

Again, we see organisers drawing on their existing awareness areas and catering to their own (demographic's typical) preferences. When different demographics organise activities it varies opportunities across the scene. However, as most organisers come from one demographic profile, events catering to a narrow set of performance styles proliferate.

Occasionally, people actively work beyond their existing knowledge and experience to create diversity within their event, though organisers found evaluation difficult: 'Positive feedback was given, but the full impact hard to quantify' (Survey, Female, 40). Thus, some activity felt unsuccessful: 'I suspect it had limited impact on numbers visiting the folk club' (Survey, Male, 65). This highlights a gap in understanding from existing organisers about what other demographic groups would like to see, how they might be reached and catered to.

[21] Based on Q24.
[22] Based on Q25 (Tried to improve accessibility? Yes: 18–40 82.1%, 41–60 73.2%, 61–86 56.1%; women 68.3%, men 57.1%, trans/non-binary 87.5%; disabled 72.4%, non-disabled 59%).
[23] Based on Q26.

Experiences from the margins

A better understanding of non-typical folk singers' experiences will help identify areas for organisers to address. Survey aside, Access Folk consulted singers who experienced personal barriers within the folk scene (Butler et al., 2023), and interviewed people with folk singing family or friends but not actively involved themselves (Gordon et al., 2024). Many themes recur, divided here into three groups: Spaces, Belonging, and Knowledge. Regardless of whether people have had lifelong or zero involvement with folk singing, very few are entirely negative about folk singing. However, the experiences of people on the margins of the folk scene, or marginalised within it, highlight areas that influence their willingness or ability to participate in folk singing.

Folk singing spaces

Folk singing in England has close historical connections with public houses, going back centuries (Dunn, 2015; Roud, 2017). The vast majority of folk song events still occur in drinking establishments. In our Consulting Group on Disability, getting into and around pubs (and other venues) was discussed on several occasions. In pubs, folk song events tend to inhabit function rooms, often on the first floor and involving a narrow staircase. Lifts or step-free access are rare in pubs and thus events using these spaces are inaccessible to anyone unable to use stairs. Although the access issues are well-known, there seems little appetite for other venues, and respondents cite the difficulty for planning permissions to 'facilitate appropriate facilities' in heritage pubs (Survey, Male, 53) or say that disabled people may not be 'comfortable asking for a venue change to accommodate them' (Survey, Female, 25). Certain proffered access solutions disregard health and safety, with several older respondents stating they 'helped carry a wheelchair up the stairs' (Survey, Female, 80) or similar (Survey, Male, 71). Even where room access *is* possible, the nature of these venues means that space is tight. With furniture scattered, people struggling with balance or poor eyesight report the environment being difficult to negotiate without support (Butler et al., 2023).

In the Consulting Group on Disability, there was some surprise at 'so little provision to address physical access to venues … given that the typical folk audience was becoming increasingly elderly and so progressively impaired' (Butler et al., 2023: 8). Given the strong connections with pubs, folk singing is more affected by physical access issues than music scenes with greater venue variety.

Although we encountered strong feelings from some who dislike singing online, many reported the rise in online events having made the scene more accessible for those who find conventional venue access challenging, including those with caring responsibilities and those with conditions that impact planning ahead (Butler et al., 2023).

> Being almost 70 and a full-time carer … I go to far fewer live events than in the past but a positive that came from [Covid-19] lockdown is the number of livestreamed folk gigs that I can still enjoy, and sing along with, in my living room. Long may they continue! (Survey, Female, 69)

An Audience Agency survey notes the streaming increase during the pandemic gave many disabled people first-time access to live music performances (Torreggiani and Mantell, 2021). Similar to several of our participants, they argue that online events continuing post Covid could be an important complement to regular in-person events. However, streaming should not excuse making the live music industry more accessible generally (ibid.).

There is a longstanding 'no amplification' preference for MCs and singers within the folk scene. For some, this is part of what provides authenticity (see MacKinnon, 1993: 119). We found that younger people are likelier to strongly prefer singing without amplification, with older cohorts generally more flexible.[24] While this suggests younger people are stauncher in their 'authenticity' drive, it may also relate to the correlation between age and disability within folk singing in England. In the Consulting Group on Disability, non-amplification was raised as an issue for people with hearing loss, especially regarding announcements and song introductions (Butler et al., 2023). Resistance to engage with basic adaptations to address access issues provoked frustration within the Consulting Group on Disability, with participants arguing that increased venue access would expand folk singing, benefitting venues and organisers.

> Access makes economic sense. Disabled people spend money on folk music too. Long established folk venues can be extremely resistant to any change, particularly those tending to be run by older volunteers who may be entrenched in their views. Cultural resistance to … microphones, printed sheet music, or music stands can be a bar to participation. (Cross, 2024)

Getting to and home from events is an issue among those already involved and those not. Most folk song events are evening occurrences and both survey and Ask a Friend (AAF) respondents reported that late-evening solo public transport travel could feel unsafe. Rural and smaller town dwellers noted that travel to folk events is not always practical. One AAF interviewee said, 'the closest [event] I could find online was an hour away and … with petrol prices … I don't think I could justify [it]' (AAF, Female, 20–34).

Many of the physical/logistical barriers around folk singing participation are similar to any participatory cultural event. Issues specific to folk singing relate to the pub preference – rarely enabling easy access and with a problematic exclusion history based on gender, race, age and excessive alcohol consumption. The demographic of those frequenting English pubs has changed significantly over the last century, but pubs are still traditionally seen as male spaces (Thurnell-Read, 2023). In the UK, the division or exclusion of pub users according to race or ethnicity was outlawed in 1965 (Jesudason, 2023; Singh et al., 2024). However, it was not until 2010 that race- or gender-based exclusion in membership clubs (sometimes used in the folk scene) was formally outlawed (Government Equalities Office, 2010; Schofield, 2023).[25] The selling and consumption of alcohol can result in legal age restrictions to access. Excessive drinking is not necessarily part of folk song events, but the environment means participants may encounter drunks. For women and LGBTQ+ people, this was highlighted as something that caused wariness about attending certain events (Butler et al., 2023).

> Folk events are often held in pubs, which can be a safety issue both due to people losing their inhibitions/judgement/capability to fend-off unwanted attention and becoming victims, as well as perpetrators becoming emboldened by alcohol. (Skaista, 2024)

[24] Based on Q6. Prefer singing without a microphone/PA? - Yes: younger 71%; middle-aged 62.1%; older 59%. Don't mind: younger 23%; middle-aged 35.4%; older 36.3%.

[25] Nevertheless, members' clubs can still restrict membership to people who share a protected characteristic (as per the Equality Act 2010).

Consulting Group participants expressed concern that such worries were not always taken seriously and feared that folk organisers sometimes lacked ability to ensure safety (Butler et al., 2023). It was also noted that licensed premises could be problematic for those who, through faith or culture, are averse to alcohol consumption. Similarly, spaces aligned with political or religious movements, such as working men's clubs and church halls (occasional folk song venues), can be off-putting for people on those grounds (ibid.).

The pub environment was nevertheless described as important to the scene and its history, and respondent associations were generally positive. For example, asked about what would make them likelier to participate in a folk singing event, one interviewee responded, 'if they were to do it in pubs. Like folk singing was supposed to be, originally […] you know, banging your mug on the table' (AAF, Male, 65–79). This notion of being in a shared social space and having fun connects to our next theme: people's sense of belonging within a folk singing community, and the knowledge needed to participate.

Belonging and knowing about folk singing

The English folk scene prides itself on 'being friendly, inclusive and politically progressive' (Butler et al., 2023). Active participants are positive about it:

> Love the music and that it's small scale. It's a place to sing without judgement, to enjoy the songs and their heritage without always needing to be the best singer. It's also a nice community of like-minded people… (Survey, Female, 62)

Most survey respondents felt that they were accepted and welcomed in the scene.[26] Although acceptance was less pronounced among ethnic minorities and other marginalised groups, most such participants experienced the scene as neutral rather than hostile. Consulting Group participants also agreed that the scene is welcoming and inclusive, to an extent. At times, they felt an assumption of inclusiveness masks real issues (largely for minority ethnic or marginalised groups). Fear of being perceived as unsettling the status quo makes addressing these obfuscated issues difficult. However, 'Just saying that everyone is welcome is not enough' (Butler et al., 2023: 16).

Scene insiders and outsiders share a recurring view that the folk world is insular, cliquey or hard to penetrate without fully committing.[27] Some AAF interviewees felt the environment was reverential, with singers tending toward self-importance.

> I often find the silence and the concentration in folk clubs, it's almost like going into church. There's something a little bit inhibiting about the whole experience for me … and people talk in hushed tones because 'Jeremy's going to do it'. It makes me want to get up and just hit an electric guitar. (AAF, Male, 65–79)

Survey respondents also talked about experiencing participation barriers due to cliquiness:

> Some folk clubs and events can feel like a closed shop … not very welcoming to unfamiliar faces… It can at some long running clubs and events feel like you are at a party you were not invited to. (Survey, Female, 70)

[26] Based on Q13.
[27] Based on Q38.

Folk song lyrics contribute to participants' ability/inability to feel at home. Many mentioned that some repertoire was off-putting and sometimes glorified outdated social systems and prejudice.

> [T]raditional songs may not even be representative of the times they were written – the many songs about women willing to sleep with strangers when in fact the treatment of such women historically was very harsh … The impact of some songs can vary depending on who is singing and in what context – songs about crossdressing female sailors can be empowering to both women and trans people in some scenarios, but offensive in others. (Skaista, 2024)

Inappropriate song content affects existing singers as well as those from marginalised groups. Half our survey respondents reported at some point hearing songs they found inappropriate.[28] Variety was repeatedly mentioned by AAF interviewees, with the perception that a folk song event could become boring, with little variation in style or repertoire.

> I've had some cracking nights at folk clubs where I've played folk music and I've gone along with the spirit of the thing. But if there was a trad folk thing happening with fabulous musicians in one pub and … an average 'Let's do a bit of everything' session in the pub next door, I'd be … next door. (AAF, Male, 64–79)

Several people said their non-engagement was not necessarily linked to lack of enjoyment of the music or events but primarily because they generally attended activities with friends and folk singing was outside their friends' activities. AAF data suggests that social engagement with friends is more important than the kinds of events attended.

> I suppose if there was something around the corner and my friends were going and it was a good laugh, then I definitely wouldn't say no. (AAF, Female, 50–64,)

Our data shows that generally, within and outside the folk scene, social connection and a sense of belonging within the musical activity is linked (see also, Hield and Crossley, 2015).

The question of skills and knowledge to participate in folk singing was a recurring theme. There is a projected 'open to all' ideology within folk, whatever one's singing skill (Hield and Mansfield, 2019). Conversely, just 'joining in' is a big hurdle from the outsider perspective. Evidence of the confidence impact of childhood singing experiences was strong in the survey and AAF data. '[H]orrific and traumatising' primary school experiences were common (AAF, Female, 50–64). Also, folk singing conventions were 'a bit intimidating' (AAF, Female 20–34) and understanding what songs counted as 'folk' was knowledge beyond some. These conventions are so unusual that one interviewee expressed feeling 'awkward' on other singers' behalf (AAF, Male, 35–49). Being able to play by ear and from memory was also an issue for some:

> When I picture folk music … there's no sheet music involved. It's just like, 'We're just playing some stuff that we all happen to know how to play like by magic', which I would not know how to do. (AAF, Female, 20–34)

[28] Based on Q33.

Although most AAF interviewees felt deep involvement in folk singing was unlikely, some said that if the participation threshold were lower it would be likelier.

> It's something I'm potentially quite interested in having a go at. … it's just knowing where there was something where you could … have a go without having to already be either very experienced or to already be part of a group. (AAF, Female, 35–49)

Knowing where and when events occur can be difficult. Even for people living close to established venues, outsiders are unlikely to know about them: 'you need to know someone who's a folkie to get into it. It's not like it's advertised widely' (AAF, Female, 20–34). Online platforms run by organisers still largely function by word of mouth. The content is aimed at updating regulars rather than informing potential new attendees about what events might entail (Hield and Mansfield, 2019). This means: 1) people unaware an event is happening cannot participate; 2) people unaware of what to expect are not attracted; 3) people interested but with specific requirements may be deterred without indication that their needs can be met.

The AAF non-singers interviewed have few strong disincentives. However, they lack knowledge about where folk singing happens, making attending less likely. They are not deterred by the presence of existing singers; indeed, they affirm the 'living heritage' attraction of folk singing. But they do want repertoires and spaces to feel relevant and safe, and to be with friends.

Grassroots strategies and interventions

Organisations within the folk scene are addressing diversity and audience development and there are multiple examples of grassroots attempts to increase participation and/or diversity within specific activities. The following presents four recurring hypotheses about what might attract more diverse communities, discussed with our findings: folk singing in schools; diversifying representation; adapting repertoires; reducing financial costs and developing policy.

Many people strongly believe that providing folk singing in schools will increase knowledge and interest. Consulting Group participants bemoaned the lack of provision within mainstream education compared with their own school experiences (Lloyd, 2024). 'School/extracurricular' was cited as a reason for starting to sing by many older people; considerably fewer of the younger or middle-aged groups mentioned it.[29] Some younger AAF interviewees suggested lack of childhood exposure to folk singing potentially influenced their lack of current engagement. Some folk interaction at schools existed, but usually through instrumental (classical) lessons. Key individuals were also influential: 'Teacher at secondary school recommended it' (Survey, Female, 34). Non-singers cited negative folk singing experiences in schools influencing their later non-participation. Nevertheless, these findings suggest that folk music exposure in schools could help people develop the knowledge to participate but is not enough alone to incite engagement.

Increasing diversity among professional performers is believed to improve diversity in participatory singing. Folk festivals have long included 'world music' and non-mainstream-folk artists. Some newer promoters, particularly in cities, offer more diverse programmes, though the Consulting Groups recognised a general lack of variety in folk programming (Butler et al., 2023). Our focus group addressing ethnic diversity felt underrepresentation was due to interrelated causes both current and historical. Several people reported that 'even though your repertoire and style of singing might be straight-up 'English folk', you sometimes get presented as exotic or foreign'

[29] Based on Q5. 'School/extracurricular' response age breakdown: 18–40 15%; 41–60 18%; 61–86 65%.

(Butler et al. 2023, p.13). The Consulting Group on Race and Ethnicity argued that plenty of black and minority ethnic performers exist within or adjacent to the folk scene, although they are not always represented by the main booking agencies (ibid., p 12). Issues related to diversity were also noted in our survey responses:

> I've brought people of wildly varying ethnic, religious, gender, economic and sexual/ gender identity backgrounds to events, to share the things I love ... and discovered (20 years ago or more) that it's not actually a very inclusive group ... so, I look now to cultivate, and shape events that are diverse, inclusive, accessible… (Survey, Female and Trans/non-binary, 40)

Although national organisations have been addressing some of these issues through dedicated events, discussions and projects, the focus group wondered whether these could really catalyse significant change if grassroots support is lacking.

Adapting repertoires could enhance willingness to participate. Much folk song repertoire can be viewed as outdated and unreflective of the personal or political standpoints of contemporary singers and non-singers alike. For example, one respondent noted their dislike of '"Jolly rape songs". I have resolved to walk out the next time someone sings "Two Magicians"'[30] (Survey, Male, 76). Sexism, racism and domestic or sexual violence were the commonest themes that respondents had found inappropriate at an event.[31] A common viewpoint: 'There are songs which are offensive in a racist/ sexist/ homophobic way that I think would be better left unsung…' (Survey, Female, 46).

Because the repertoire has developed within a fairly homogeneous social group the areas of offence have settled to a point that are acceptable to participants, or repetitive exposure has desensitised them:

> Men regularly sing songs that feature violence against women or negative stereotypes of women … I'm honestly pretty inured to it by now and barely notice. (Survey, Female, 32)

But scene outsiders notice:

> At last year's festival an Asian family attended. [One] performer started singing Kipling songs with terms like half-caste and other less polite terms. The father took the children out very quickly. (Survey, Male, 64)

Framing such songs with explanations, rather than ceasing to sing them, is one suggestion. One singer feels that 'All the violence against women stuff is dodgy, but it is a part of the tradition, and can be okay if given a context' (Survey, Male, 76). Many feel that 'it's often about the context … the same song can be presented appropriately or inappropriately' (Survey, Male, 56).

The Consulting Groups discussed the practice of (mostly younger) people finding space to explore gender fluidity through folk repertoire. However, some survey respondents have concerns about 'chang[ing] some of the song lyrics to fit in with today's topics' (Survey, Female, 54). A small minority believe that 'these are historical and should not be prettied up for wokish

[30] 'The Two Magicians' is one of several titles for no. 1350 in the Roud Index.
[31] Based on Q34.

consumption' (Survey, Male, 76). Two threads seem to be at play here: one preserving the historic nature of materials and another feeling forced to accept differing ideologies:

> I have walked out of concerts because I object to people trying to indoctrinate me into left-wing politics or trying to get me to accept 'LBGTQ...' rubbish as being normal and acceptable – it is neither...! (Survey, Male, 76)

This points to a variety of perspectives and a lack of acknowledging them:

> Some people can assume that everyone in the room shares the same political or (non-) religious views … it's not very welcoming or comfortable for those whose views might [differ] … I do encounter this regularly... An individual performer … is of course free to hold and express whatever beliefs and opinions they wish, within the law, but it would be less unpleasant if they considered the possibility that good-hearted people in the room might legitimately disagree with them, and consider that when they speak. (Survey, Male, 56)

The repertoires at participatory folk singing events are incrementally constructed by those singing. If the majority share (or do not challenge) an established worldview, the repertoire will reflect this. When participation diversifies, the repertoires will similarly alter, potentially to the detriment of enjoyment from some existing singers. This is 'chicken or egg': does change need to occur before different kinds of people can participate, or will it happen as a result of their engagement? This perhaps explains why we have not seen much success in the wider participation drive.

Folk organisers generally assume that reducing costs will increase attraction. Costs were rarely mentioned by survey respondents regarding barriers. Post Covid-19, the UK's 'cost of living crisis' has seen rising costs across society. Our research suggested the 'cost of entry to events can be a barrier for old and young alike' (Lloyd, 2024). Within the folk scene, there is free/cheap entry to participatory singing events but folk festivals and large concerts are perceived as expensive by existing singers. AAF interviewees affirmed festivals and concerts are lower threshold activities for participation, while the free activities are generally seen as too intense. However, only a handful of AAF interviewees reported that cost was a significant factor in their non-engagement with events. While reducing costs might increase engagement, the events themselves are the more significant element.

Inclusive policies make people (feel) able to participate. The need for the folk scene to engage more with the Equality Act 2010 and the Social Model of Disability, in particular, were frequently mentioned within the Consulting Groups. National organisations and campaigns such as EFDSS, Joint Morris Organisation and Esperance are driving forces here. Emerging changes were noted in our survey: e.g. 'many festivals now provide specific seats for physically disabled folks' (Survey, Trans/non-binary, 23). However, bar a few strong examples, for most smaller activities, accessible policies are less visible.

The Social Model of Disability, promoted by disability advocates and government agencies, argues that society needs to 'switch the focus away from the functional limitations of individuals with an impairment on to the problems caused by disabling environments, barriers and cultures' (Oliver, 2004: 21). Removing disabling environments will ultimately benefit society. While adopting the Social Model of Disability may suggest major changes – like moving venues to accommodate physical access – other participant-requested changes were easier. There are calls

to ‘make websites accessible with visible information about access policies, and positive disability awareness’ (Cross, 2024), and promoters ‘declaring they are open to all races/ genders/ sexualities/ abilities’ (Survey, Trans/non-binary, 29).

Three themes emerge to explain organisers’ lack of engagement: financial and time costs; education; and ideology. Improving accessibility requires money and time, rare in voluntary groups. The Consulting Groups posited external funding; however, there was also reluctance to be bound by external funding body requirements and aversion to the inevitable red tape. Improving equality also requires education. There is a ‘general lack of awareness of reasonable adjustments’ (Cross, 2024). Training volunteers occurs informally: ‘it is going to be very difficult for us as a movement to encourage people involved in the running of voluntary groups to become up to date in these matters’ (ibid.). There is an ideological tension between the ways the scene operates and the changes necessary to adhere to inclusive policies. The implicit ‘expectation of behaviour’ in the scene first noted by MacKinnon (1993, p. 55) could be managed by presenting explicit information about activities, including their values and organisational structures. Creating more explicit codes of conduct for folk singing events would potentially support access, although a small minority of the survey respondent also reported a fear that such changes could ‘increase inclusion at the expense of regular attendance’ (Survey, Male, 72).

Conclusions

There are inclusion issues within folk singing in England. While attraction to other aspects of the practice outweighs the issues participants encounter, for more casual attendees, access and repertoire issues may discourage repeat attendance. People want to engage in folk singing, but the organisation of activities is conducted by people within a narrow demographic profile. Attracting new participants is strongly desired; however, event structures and repertoires reflect existing participants’ preferences. Making the scene more inclusive requires more accessible venues, wider promotion, clearer information, and fair representation in the media, more equitable music education, increased safeguarding and more diverse representation in personnel and repertoires. Adaptations will likely bring change, but there is inhibiting friction between the desire for diversity and the desire to retain existing structures and ideologies.

This research confirms and expands upon previous research findings, and supports assumptions common within the scene. Varied methodological approaches have dug past received-wisdom theories to ground our understanding of the scene in personal experiences. Through participatory research we have engaged active folk singers in designing and delivering methods and data analysis, highlighting the areas of most significance to themselves. Although many areas are sensitive there has been an overwhelming response both by marginalised singers and others interested to interrogate these issues within a supportive environment. By bringing several investigations together through cross analysis, we have presented different perspectives, concerns and experiences around common themes.

We have revealed a two-fold problem: getting new people to activities and retaining their engagement. The folk scene is underground, events hard to find and participation’s nature hard to understand. These issues could be addressed through wider, more informative, promotion. However, merely getting people to events will be insufficient to maintain participation. This research shows that there are deeper issues that are, at best, off-putting to minority groups.

Social and performance conventions present a contradiction between insiders’ perception of being welcoming, and outsiders’ fear of judgement. The very actions intended to promote comfort, such as inviting people to sing, can achieve the exact opposite. Inappropriate song content

alongside political opinions within spoken introductions are concerning. These feelings are shared by opposing ends of the spectrum – offence being taken at both liberal and conservative opinions, as well as those who do not align politics with their folk singing at all. Another contradictory issue is the preferred environment: the pub. There are multiple physical access issues here, plus persistent gender, race and age dynamics at play, with alcohol consumption adding further safeguarding and belief-based issues. Nevertheless, the pub is also seen by both insiders and outsiders as a natural environment for this form of singing. There were very few calls to abandon these spaces.

The issues herein may seem obvious to some, but we have found them not always understood by those not affected. What existing organisers believe will enhance access differs to what those they are targeting want or need. Assumptions are made about what others want, and what they should/should not be attracted to, offended by or need. This was particularly noticeable observing the folk singers conducting the AAF interviews, initially thinking (erroneously) that folk events are intrinsically welcoming. Attempting change based on unfounded assumptions is unlikely to work and can be disheartening.

The scene's voluntary-run nature is significant. Volunteer organisers tend to cater to small communities or personal networks, rather than fulfilling broader 'audience' or social needs – a function primarily led by staffed organisations. Demographic groups with higher experience of participation barriers are more active in making change to improve accessibility for others. These demographics are a minority of organisers. Change will not be forthcoming without volunteer organisers holding different perspectives, or existing organisers developing a remit to move beyond their own preferences.

There is general enthusiasm within the folk scene to get more people singing, but a lack of acknowledgement about what that means in reality. The concept of including people who make up their local community is positive, but when the music those people share is unfamiliar, or does not match their political standpoint, it is problematic. While people want to be inclusive, holding activities in physically and culturally accessible venues could take them out of the dark upstairs rooms of pubs. Fulfilling the structures required by funding bodies will create a professionalisation that may alter the nature and delivery of activities. While existing singers want attendance to diversify, there will be an inevitable shift in the practice.

By moving past assumptions and prejudice from both within and outside the scene, recognising these barriers to folk singing can present catalysts for positive change rather than being read as a set of failures. Regardless of the issues around folk singing practice, there is evident passion and interest in engaging with folk singers and repertoire to increase and diversify participation.

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Appendix
Access Folk Survey Questions

Section 1. Participation and Community
In this section, we will ask you about how you take part in folk singing events in England. We will also ask you about the community you built through your folk singing participation. We will use this information to find out how people take part in folk singing and how it affects their everyday lives.

Q1 What kind of singing do you do? Tick all that apply
- Perform professionally/semi-professionally
- Lead songs
- Sing choruses
- I don't sing in public

Q2 What kinds of folk singing events do you attend? Tick all that apply
- Folk clubs
- Concerts
- Singarounds
- Folk festivals
- Open mic nights
- Other traditional community singing (like carol singing)
- Folk choir
- I don't go to folk singing events
- Other, please describe

Q3 How many times have you been folk singing in the last four weeks?
- 0
- 1-2
- 3-5
- 6-10
- Over 10

Q4 How old were you when you first took part in a folk singing event?

Q5 Why did you choose to start folk singing?

Q6 In general, do you prefer to sing
- With a PA / microphone

- Without a PA / microphone
- Don't mind
- Prefer not to say

Q7 In general, do you prefer to sing
- From the front / a stage
- From my seat / standing as part of a group
- Don't mind
- Prefer not to say

Q8 In general, do you prefer to sing
- With instruments
- Without instruments
- A mixture
- Don't mind
- Prefer not to say

Q9 In general, do you prefer to sing
- With a score / words
- Without a score / words
- A mixture
- Don't mind
- Prefer not to say

Q10 Please describe your ideal folk singing environment.

Q11 How well do you think you sing when you take part in a folk singing event?
0 = I sing very badly
10 = I sing excellently.

Q12 How important to you is it that other people are good singers at folk singing events?
- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Neutral
- Not very important
- Not at all important

Q13 How accepted do you feel when you sing at a folk singing event?
- Very accepted
- Somewhat accepted
- Neutral
- Not very accepted
- Not at all accepted

Q14 What kind of relationships do you have with people you have met at folk singing events? Please tick all that apply

- Friendships
- Short-term romantic relationships (like dating)
- Long-term relationships (like marriage, civil partnerships, co-habiting)
- Professional relationships (like business collaborators, employers/employees)
- I do not have any personal relationships with people I meet at folk singing events
- Other, please describe

Q15 What other types of music events do you take part in? Please tick all that apply
- Audience at rock/pop gigs
- Audience at classical concerts
- Audience at electronic music / DJ sets
- Audience at non-folk festivals
- Play in a rock/pop group
- Play in a classical group
- Play electronic music / DJ sets
- Sing in a classical choir
- Sing in a religious group
- Sing at sporting events
- Go to workshops / take private lessons
- I only take part in folk singing events
- Other, please describe

Q16 Have you ever been involved in organising folk singing events as an organiser, promoter, volunteer or in another way?
- Yes
- No

Q17 How have you been involved in organising folk singing events? Tick all that apply
- Volunteer helper at the event
- Volunteer helper around the event (e.g., advertising)
- Volunteer organiser as part of a small committee
- Sole volunteer organiser
- Self-employed organiser earning money from the event
- Employed organiser earning money from a third part to organise the event

Q20 For how long did you / have you organised folk singing events?
- I just organised a one-off event
- Under 1 year
- 1 to 5 years
- 5 to 10 years
- 10 to 20 years
- Over 20 years

Q21 Have you organised non-folk music events as well?
- Yes, please describe
- No

- Prefer not to say

Q22 What motivates you to organise folk singing events?

Q23 Have you ever actively tried to reach people who may not normally attend folk singing events?
- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Q24 Please describe what you did and what impacts (if any) these actions had

Q25 Have you ever actively tried to improve accessibility to your events? By "accessibility", we mean removing barriers that might prevent disabled people from attending an event.
- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Q26 Please describe how you tried to improve accessibility to your events and what impacts (if any) these actions had

Section 2. Identity and Inclusion
In this section, we will ask you about your experiences and opinions of folk singing in England. We want to understand the contexts in which people participate and any barriers people may experience when they try to participate in folk singing.

Q27 Which factors are important to you when you choose to sing a particular folk song? Please tick all that apply.
- You enjoy the melody
- You enjoy the lyrics for their poetry
- You like to sing about a particular topic
- It is similar to songs other people sing at the events you attend
- The song's origin interests you
- The song's content is important to preserve for future generations
- The song's content connects with your personal experience
- The song's content connects you to the past
- The song's content connects you to a specific place
- The song's content connects you to a political message
- The song's content connects you to a specific ethnic group
- Other, please describe

Q28 You selected that the song's content connects you to a specific place. Please describe the place.

Q29 You selected that you like to sing about a particular topic. Please describe the topic.

Q30 You selected that the song's origin interests you. Please describe the types of origins that interest you.

Q31 You selected that you connect with the song's political message. Please describe the political message that you connect with.

Q32 Would you like to tell us anything about why you choose to sing particular songs?

Q33 Have you ever heard a song at a folk singing event that you felt was inappropriate?
- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Q34 If you feel comfortable doing so, please describe what you found inappropriate.

Q35 Did you raise this with anyone at the event?
- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Q36 What (if any) impact did this incident have on your own folk singing activity?

Q37 Have you ever experienced any barriers to participating in a folk singing event? For example, something relating to mental or physical health that could not be accommodated, or feeling unwelcome due to your age, gender, sexuality or ethnicity?
- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Q38 Please describe the barrier you experienced

Q39 Are you aware of any attempts by the organisers of folk singing events you have attended to be more inclusive or increase accessibility to the event?
- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Q40 Please describe what you noticed the organiser did to be more inclusive or increase accessibility to the event.

Q41 Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your experiences relating to folk singing in England - in particular about community, identity or inclusion - that has not been covered in this survey?

Q42 - We have shared this survey as widely as we can but due to the ever-changing nature of the folk scene and new kinds of events, we know we will have missed some. Are there any folk events that you think we might not know about?

Q43 Section 3. Demographics.
Finally, we are going to ask you a series of questions to determine your demographic profile. This information is strictly anonymous but will be used to explore whether different groups of people have different experiences of English folk singing. We thank you for sharing this information.

Q44 - How old are you?

Q45 - What best describes your gender
● Male
● Female
● Non-binary / third gender
● Trans

● Prefer not to say
● In another way, please describe

Q46 How would you describe your sexual orientation?
● Gay
● Lesbian
● Heterosexual/Straight
● Bisexual
● Queer
● Questioning
● Not sure
● Prefer not to say
● In another way, please describe

Q47 What is the highest educational qualification you have obtained?
● Entry level award, certificate, diploma, ESOL, essential skills, or functional skills
● GSCE and equivalent (e.g., Standard grades, first certificate; ESOL, NVQ)
● A level or equivalent (e.g., AS level; Highers; International Baccalaureate diploma; access to higher education diploma)
● Undergraduate degree (e.g., BA, BSc, Certificate/diploma of higher education)
● Postgraduate taught degree (e.g., MA, MSc, MEng; postgraduate certificate or diploma; PGCE)
● Postgraduate research degree (e.g., PhD, DPhil)
● Other, please describe

Q48 Which social class do you most identify with?
● Working class
● Middle class
● Upper class
● Prefer not to say
● Other, please describe

Q49 - Do you live in the United Kingdom
● Yes
● No

Q50_1 - Please provide the first part of your postcode, e.g., S35 or BD22. (This question is important for understanding the distribution of our respondents. Respondents cannot be identified from their postcode data. You will not be identified, contacted

Q51 - What is your country of residence

Q52 How would you describe your national identity?
● English
● Welsh
● Scottish
● Northern Irish
● Manx
● Cornish
● British
● Prefer not to say
● Other, please describe

Q53 What best describes your ethnic group?
● White English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British
● White Manx
● White Cornish
● White Irish
● White Gypsy or Traveller
● Any other white background, please describe
_____
● African
● Caribbean
● Any other Black/African/Caribbean background, please describe
_____
● Indian
● Pakistani
● Bangladeshi
● Chinese
● Arab

● Any other Asian background, please describe

_____

● White and Black Caribbean
● White and Black African
● White and Asian
● Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background, please describe

_____

● Any other ethnic group, please describe

_____

● Prefer not to say

Q54 What is your religion, if any?
● No religion
● Christian, no denomination
● Roman Catholic
● Church of England / Anglican
● Other Christian denomination, please describe

_____

● Buddhist
● Hindu
● Jewish
● Muslim
● Sikh
● Any other religion, please describe

_____

● Don't know
● Prefer not to say

Q55 Are you currently practising this religion?
● Yes
● No
● Prefer not to say

Q56 Do you consider yourself to be d/Deaf or disabled, or do you have a long-term physical or mental health condition? (We will not ask you to identify any disability or health condition).
● Yes
● No
● Prefer not to say

Q57 If there was a general election tomorrow, which political party would you be most likely to support?
● Conservative Party
● Labour Party
● Liberal Democrats
● Green Party
● Other, please state

Q58 How politically engaged do you consider yourself to be (0-10)?
0 = not politically engaged at all
10 = very politically engaged