# The Black Adoption Project

## Phase 1 report

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Authors:
Laurelle Brown
Lydia Samuel
Sherrelle Parke

BLACK ADOPTION PROJECT

ADOPT LONDON

LAURELLE BROWN TRAINING & CONSULTANCY

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Any enquiries related to this publication or the **Black Adoption Project** should be sent to us at hello@laurellebrown.co.uk.

# Contents


**Executive Summary** 04

**Background** 07

- Race, racialisation, and ethnicity 08
- The Black Adoption Project 09
- Research approach and datasets 10

**What can we understand from adoption and population data?** 12

- Are Black children over-represented in care and adoption systems? 13
- What proportion of the Black children placed for adoption in England are in Adopt London boroughs? 15
- Does ethnicity impact on the likelihood of a child with a plan for adoption going on to be adopted? 16
- Do adoption timescales differ for Black children? 17
- How many Black prospective adoptive parents does Adopt London recruit? 18
- What does population data tell us about recruiting Black adopters? 19
- Do timescales differ for Black prospective adopters in the adoption assessment and matching process? 20
- When Black prospective adopters start the assessment process, how likely are they to go on to adopt a child? 21

**What can we understand from the perceptions and experiences of Black communities and adopters?** 22

- Survey respondents 22
- What factors encourage and enable Black families to adopt? 23
- What factors discourage and hinder Black families from adopting? 24
- What awareness and perceptions exist about Black children in need of adoption? 28

**Final Comments** 31

- Survey respondents 32

**Appendix** 34

- Key definitions 34
- Tables and charts 35

**Citations** 44

# Executive Summary

**The Black Adoption Project was born out of a commitment to address the stark disparities that exist within adoption for Black children and families.**

Nationally, there are significant inequalities for Black children in care in areas such as safeguarding, permanence and mental health[1]. There are also long-standing and persistent challenges in recruiting enough Black adoptive parents to provide sufficient options for Black children. Whilst some adoptive parents of non-Black racial and ethnic groups are strongly placed to adopt and support a Black child, and whilst this is right for some children, trans-racial adoption alone is not a solution to the disparities for Black children in the adoption system currently.

The **Black Adoption Project** (**'The Project'**) was born out of a commitment to address the stark disparities that exist within adoption for Black children and families. The **Project** recognises that a coordinated focus is needed to bring about change; it is an attempt to look beyond short-term solutions and to genuinely understand, and respond to, the many complex factors that impact the adoption of Black children. The **Project** is a long-term commitment from **Adopt London** (a partnership of four Regional Adoption Agencies working together to provide adoption services for 24 London boroughs[2]) in partnership with **Laurelle Brown Training and Consultancy**, and in collaboration with **Adopt London** staff, those with lived experience of adoption, and community groups.

The **Project's** first year (2021/22) focused on understanding the extent of the issue, supporting and developing staff, and formally establishing the **Project**. Exploratory mixed-methods research was undertaken to provide an overview of adoption trends in the **Adopt London** region and a better understanding of the current experience of adoptive parents and communities, to inform **Project** design and planning. The findings from metadata analysis of a range of adoption, population, and policy data, focus groups and an online public survey have developed the Project's understanding of the current experience of Black children, adoptive parents, and communities, and informed co-creation of a **Project** theory of change.

This report outlines the findings of the mixed-methods research undertaken between October 2021 and April 2022, which consisted of:

- **Metadata analysis** of a range of local and national adoption, population, and policy data. Adoption data used was from Adoption & Special Guardianship Leadership Board (ASGLB) data submissions; children's data covered the 5 years 2016/17 – 2021/22, and adoptive parent's data covered the 3 years 2018/19 – 2021/22.
- **Semi-structured focus group interviews** with Black adoptive parents, families currently in the adoption process and wider community members with no experience of adoption.
- **An online public survey** that received 342 responses from adoptive parents, prospective adopters, individuals that had previously enquired about adoption and individuals with no experience of adoption.

**The first part of the report** explores the disparities in experiences and processes in the adoption system, the number and experience of Black adoptive households in the adoption process, and what other related data may tell us about the adoption system.

### Experiences and outcomes of Black children

Black children are over-represented in the care system in England, and this overrepresentation cannot be explained by poverty alone. Black Caribbean children in England were 20 times more likely to be in care than white British children, with 3.6 times as many Black children looked after in London per Black adult compared to the number of white children looked after per white adult.

Of all children placed for adoption in the period analysed, just 6% of those placed in England were Black, compared to 26% placed by **Adopt London** boroughs. However, there is still much work to do to improve adoption experiences and outcomes for Black children and families. Black children with a Placement Order were found to be around 20% less likely to be successfully placed for adoption than white British children, and to spend an average of 6½ to 8 months longer in the adoption process before moving in with their adoptive family.

### Experiences and outcomes of Black adopters

Some racial and ethnic disparities are also faced by Black adopters. Black-only households were around 5 – 6 times more likely than white-only households to leave the adoption process without adopting a child, however there were no significant differences in the time taken to complete the process. The adopter eligibility criteria and assessment process are likely preventing Black communities from adopting at a disproportionately high rate, compounding other systemic barriers faced in society. Despite these challenges, 17.1% of all adopters approved within **Adopt London** were from Black and mixed Black ethnic groups compared to just 2.8% nationally, however as adopter recruitment levels in London are generally low, these numbers are not adequate to meet the needs of Black children with a care plan of adoption.

**The second part of the report** shares findings that emerged from the analysis of survey and focus group responses from Black adopters, Black families going through the adoption process, and Black community members with no experience of adoption. The small number of self-selecting participants means that findings cannot be generalised to reflect Black communities at large, however, they are taken as a collection of views that provide insight into perceptions and experiences of adoption.

#### *Discouraging and hindering adoption by Black families*

Participants shared that **financial barriers** and inequalities, a lengthy and challenging **adoption process**, a lack of **post-adoption support** (including culturally informed support), and the impact of **racism and racial bias** negatively affect their experiences and outcomes. Furthermore, these factors lead to, and possibly exacerbate, other negative impacts for some Black families, such as their mental health and well-being.

Participants shared that financial pressures caused some **anxiety** and that a lack of workforce representation had led to feelings of isolation. Black men and women in the UK already experience significant mental health inequalities[3], with Black women most likely to have experienced a common mental disorder such as anxiety or depression[4]. If the experiences and outcomes of Black families across **Adopt London** are to improve, then the Black Adoption Project and wider stakeholders and systems must recognise and proactively seek to eliminate systems and processes which uphold and reinforce existing **inequalities**.

*Factors Encouraging and enabling Black families to adopt*

Most survey respondents considered adoption because they wanted to help a child of a similar ethnic background (51%). This was echoed by some focus group participants who felt strongly that race and ethnicity were an intrinsic part of their decision to adopt. However, ethnicity is not a motivating factor for all individuals, and for some was irrelevant. A significant proportion of survey respondents wanted to help any child (35%), and others were primarily motivated to adopt owing to not being able to have their own children due to fertility problems, being single, or being a same-sex couple. There can be a tendency to view Black ethnic groups as a monolith with a shared experience, however, these findings highlight their diversity as a range of intersecting backgrounds and experiences. The **Black Adoption Project** must avoid conflating backgrounds and experiences and making generalisations about Black communities, and instead commit to identifying and responding to specific opportunities and specific needs as much as possible.

*Perceptions held by Black communities*

None of the focus group participants from the public said that they had seen the promotion of adoption in the media. Whilst the adopters in the groups had seen promotion for adoption, there was no strong positive feeling about it, and for some, the presence of a few Black people in the visual imagery felt to be tokenistic. There was little sense that adoption promotion specifically targeted Black communities, and there appears to be a missing influential and respected voice that actively promotes adoption. This, in addition to a misalignment between the formal process of adoption and a cultural norm of informal adoption in some Black communities, is hindering awareness raising.

This report outlines important insights into the experiences and outcomes of Black children, adopters and families in adoption, an under-researched area in London, and the UK. Findings evidence the extent and impact of inequalities for Black children and families at every stage of the adoption process. They offer insight into potential opportunities to mobilise change through existing, and under-utilised principles and approaches, including power sharing, community engagement and partnership. The findings emphasise the range and interaction of peer, professional and material support needs of Black families and adoptive parents, and the collaboration required to better understand these and develop sustainable solutions. Most notably, it highlights the role of multi-dimensional racism and other interconnected forms of oppression in compounding adoption challenges for **Adopt London**, prospective Black adopters and the wider sector.

The wide-ranging and complex factors impacting experiences and outcomes of Black children and families in adoption need to be better understood. Particularly in the context of the increasingly hostile and changing socio-political climate, national and local adoption and children's social care policy, public sector workforce, funding and capacity pressures, and the deeply entrenched range of inequalities for Black communities. Undertaking further research should remain a priority for the **Black Adoption Project**, in addition to collating literature currently available on this topic and connecting with those tackling similar issues.

Finally, it must be noted that the structural issues identified in this research as impacting adoption experiences and outcomes, will require central government-led action, delivered through regional and local systems, to be properly addressed. Current children's social care reform[5] presents a timely opportunity to explicitly name and address inequalities, including racism and socio-economic inequalities.

# Background

**The Project is an attempt to look beyond short-term solutions and to genuinely understand, and respond to, the many complex factors that impact the adoption of Black children.**

**Adopt London** is a partnership of four Regional Adoption Agencies working together to provide adoption services for 24 London boroughs[2]. Launched in October 2019, **Adopt London** was aware of long-standing and persistent challenges in recruiting enough Black adoptive parents, and the impact of this on Black children. This concern quickly became a central priority of **Adopt London**. Whilst some adoptive parents of non-Black racial identities and ethnicities are strongly placed to adopt and support a Black child, and whilst this is right for some children, trans-racial adoption is complex and is not alone a solution to the disparities for Black children in the adoption system[6,7,8]. We recognise that Black people often face more barriers to adopting and have more challenges to overcome when they become adoptive parents. To improve the opportunities and outcomes for Black children in the adoption system, we need to recognise and take every possible step to remove obstacles and provide the support that's needed to Black adoptive parents before and after adoption and to walk alongside and support parents of other racial identities and ethnicities who have adopted Black children. As a collaboration between four Regional Adoption Agencies covering 24 London boroughs, **Adopt London** has a unique opportunity to try to do something different to address this issue.

Working in partnership with **Laurelle Brown Training and Consultancy**, the **Black Adoption Project** was born out of a commitment by **Adopt London** to address the stark disparities that exist within adoption for Black children and families and a recognition that a co-ordinated organisational focus is needed on this issue to bring about change. The **Project** is an attempt to look beyond short-term solutions and to genuinely understand, and respond to, the many complex factors that impact the adoption of Black children. The **Project** is a long-term commitment from **Adopt London** in partnership with **Laurelle Brown Training and Consultancy**, and in collaboration with **Adopt London** staff, those with lived experience of adoption, and community groups. At the heart of the **Project's** approach is the need for meaningful partnership and collaboration with racialised individuals and communities.

This first research phase of the Project aims to provide an overview of adoption trends in the **Adopt London** region, enabling a better understanding of the current experience of Black children, adoptive parents, and communities, to inform the co-creation of a **Project** strategy and theory of change. The research contained in this report was undertaken between October 2021 and April 2022.

# Race, racialisation, and ethnicity

**The definition of 'Black' being used within the Project is:**

**You refer to yourself as Black, and some or all your ancestry/ancestors are from Africa, the Caribbean or elsewhere**

The term 'race' refers to a '…mixture of physical, behavioural and cultural attributes[9], however, the concept of 'race' is controversial. Racial categories vary and are contested, and it is well documented that 'race' is a 'flawed biological principle [that] laid the groundwork for the belief that some races were superior to others…[10]. Categorising individuals according to skin colour or other aspects of physical appearance is unreliable; this is particularly significant in the context of adoption, where details of an adoptee's birth family and/or heritage will sometimes be unknown, resulting in their identity resting on a flawed and constructed ascribed value.

We recognise that the **Project's** name and focus include this socially constructed notion and way of ascribing value (that is 'race'[11]). Nevertheless, the race and racialisation of Black children and adults underpin the **Black Adoption Project**, and ultimately the experiences and opportunities of the children, adoptive parents, adult adoptees, and communities we work with. The Independent Review of Children's Social Care (2022), reinforced this point, highlighting that '…racial inequalities are amongst the most pronounced disparities in children's social care'[12] With this in mind, the **Project** uses the term 'Black' to reflect an awareness of racialisation as a key factor in adoption experiences and outcomes. Care has been taken to ensure there is no naturalising of racial categories, conflation and/or interchangeable use with 'ethnicity'.

Although the terms 'Black' and 'Black communities' are used throughout this report, and within the **Project**, we acknowledge that Black racialised individuals and communities are not a monolith, and as such their identities and experiences are not the same. In our research we have been limited by the ethnicity categories that are used in the official collection of data and our findings have therefore been shaped and restricted by these categories. Wherever possible with the data available we have considered both Black and mixed Black ethnicity categories (as individuals identified within a 'mixed Black ethnicity' category are most often racialised as Black), however, this has not always been possible.

This **Project** is specifically focused on Black children because children of Black and mixed Black ethnicity consistently experience some of the most significant disparities in the adoption system. We hope that some of the approaches we develop in this Project, and our learning from research and practice, will enable us to apply a similar approach to other groups who experience disparities in children's social care.

Finally, the **Project's** focus on race, and ethnicity, is in the context of intersectionality[13]. That is, being cognisant of intersecting identities, such as socioeconomic background and disability, and intersecting forms of oppression, such as poverty and ableism; and seeking to better understand the complex and interdependent personal, institutional, and systemic factors[14] that impact adoption experiences and outcomes for racialised children, adult adoptees, adoptive parents, and communities.

# The Black Adoption Project

**It has been critical to the developing Project to establish a strong governance structure and start to build an integrated programme of workforce development.**

## Workforce development

A key strand of work within the **Project**, in addition to research and practice, is workforce support and development. There is an established body of evidence that highlights gaps in learning and development about race, racialisation, and racism[15,16,17], and disproportionality in negative workforce experiences and outcomes for Black racialised staff in children's social care[18,19].

Within this first **Project** phase, a series of training sessions were designed and delivered with Adopt London staff, including social workers, managers, senior leaders and administrative staff. Sessions have enabled staff to explore and develop their understanding of concepts such as racism, intersectionality, microaggressions and advantage/privilege, and the impact of these on their work in children's social care, specifically adoption.

**Feedback has suggested that these initial workforce initiatives have had a positive effect in developing staff knowledge, understanding and feelings of safety; further work to develop and evaluate the initiatives will be undertaken in phase two of the Project.**

In addition, independently facilitated 'Safe Space Sessions' are being piloted to provide Black racialised staff with a place to share and reflect on their experiences as racialised individuals working within **Adopt London** and the adoption system. The pilot sessions will run until the end of 2023.

## Governance structure

A **Project** governance structure was co-developed to ensure there is wide representation and diverse input into the direction and focus of the **Project**. Particular attention has been paid to ensuring the involvement of those with different lived experiences of adoption (such as adopted adults and adoptive parents), and of Black staff working in different roles within **Adopt London**. Stakeholder groups will be expanded in future **Project** phases to ensure diverse voices and perspectives are heard, including adopted children or young people.

# Research approach and datasets

**How can we improve adoption outcomes for Black adoptees and Black adoptive parents?**

This first phase of research was 'applied' in approach[20], in that it was undertaken with a specific focus on of improving adoption experiences and outcomes for Black children, adult adoptees, adoptive parents, and communities.

The research objective was to begin to understand:

**'How can we improve adoption outcomes for Black adoptees and Black adoptive parents?'**

Two sub questions were also explored:

- **'What factors encourage and discourage/enable and prevent Black families from adopting?'**
- **'What are the levels of awareness of and perceptions about Black children in need of adoption?'**

The research adopted a collaborative approach, proactively engaging a stakeholder group of Black adoptive parents to design and test the approach, as well as co-design between **Adopt London** and **Laurelle Brown Training and Consultancy**.

## Research methodology and limitations

The research involved three methods, these were:

**Metadata analysis** of a range of adoption, population, and policy data, primarily:

- Adoption & Special Guardianship Leadership Board (ASGLB) data for Adopt London RAAs and their boroughs
- National ASGLB data
- UK census data

The metadata analysis drew on several sources of data and was limited to the data fields and categories within those data sets. For this reason, the various aspects of the research in this report are presented differently – particularly regarding ethnicity categories. Data limitations such as these impacted the extent to which the research question and sub-questions were answered. Later phases of the **Project** will focus on gathering additional data and insight to broaden the evidence base and answer questions that the existing datasets have not been able to answer.

**Semi-structured focus groups** facilitated with:

- **Pilot group:** We Are Family Black adoptive parents' group
- **Focus group 1:** Black adoptive parents (5 participants)
- **Focus group 2:** Black families currently in the adoption process (7 participants, including 3 individuals and 2 couples)
- **Focus group 3:** Wider community group/no experience of adoption (14 participants)

The three focus groups were diverse in their experiences and therefore not comparable across the various stages of adoption experience; most of group 1, the adoptive parents' group, had adopted over a decade ago, and group 2 were in various stages of the adoption process, and group 3 had little or no exposure to adoption.

The groups were recruited via mixed methods:

- **Focus group 1:** A self-selecting group that had adopted a child through an Adopt London local authority, recruited via email invite from Adopt London or We Are family
- **Focus group 2:** A self-selecting group that were in the process of adopting a child through an Adopt London local authority, recruited via email invite from Adopt London or We Are family
- **Focus group 3:** A self-selecting group recruited via social media, survey and word of mouth invitations which included promotion of participation payment

Due to time and capacity limitations, group pre-screening consisted of ensuring participants self-identified as 'Black' as per the **Project** definition. This may have contributed to the social desirability bias[21] that was apparent in focus group 3; participants appeared to choose responses they believed were more socially desirable or acceptable rather than responses that reflected their true feelings. The lack of awareness and experience of adoption, the incentivised participant recruitment approach, and the nature of some of the comments made during the focus group suggest that this group had different motivations for participating in the research, compared with those who had direct experience of adoption. In addition, individuals had not met each other or the researcher previously. It is therefore considered that social desirability may have influenced some of their responses.

**Online public survey** to understand attitudes, perceptions, and experiences of adoption for Black individuals received a total of 342 survey responses from:

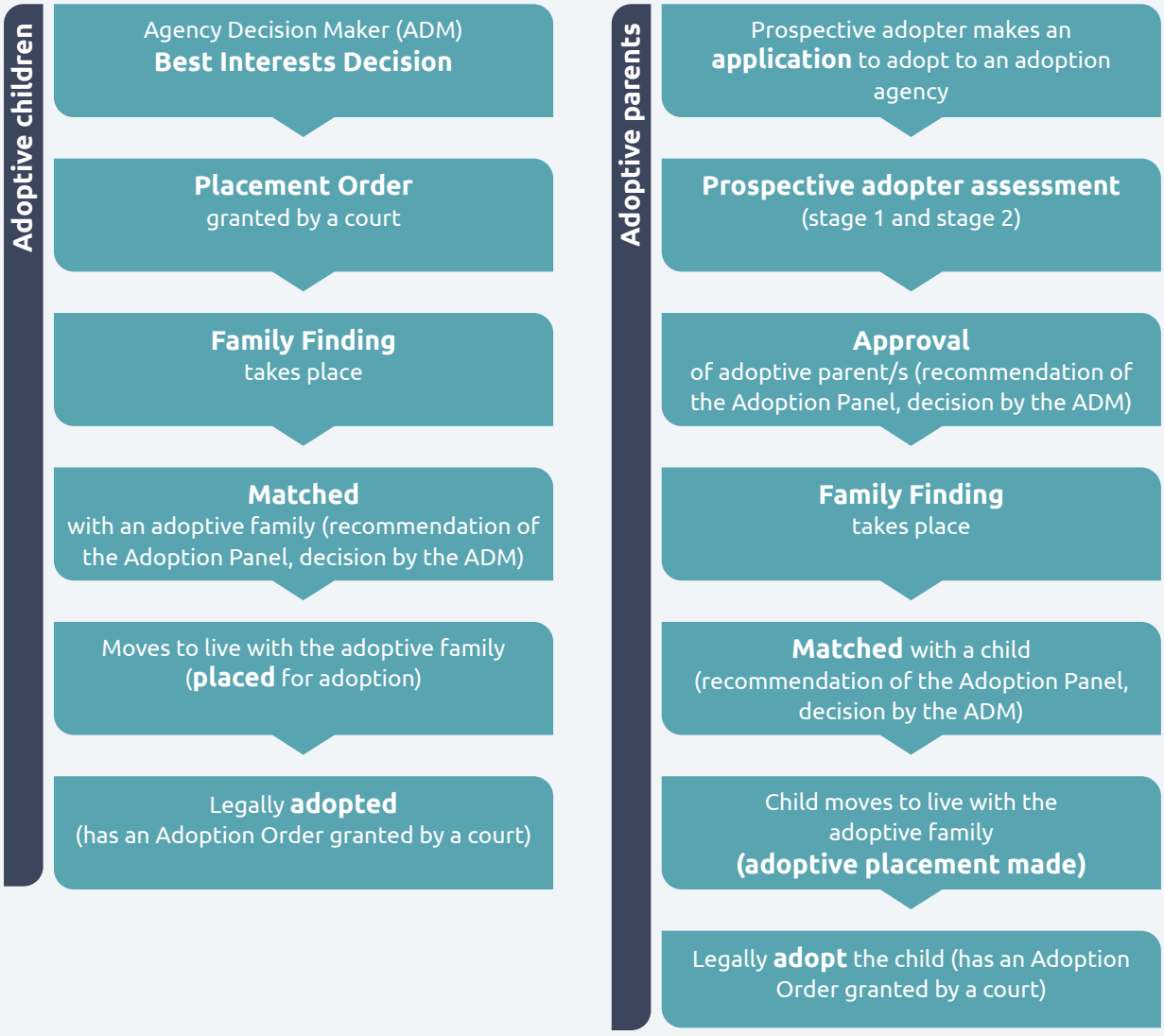
- Adoptive parents
- Prospective adopters
- Individuals that had previously enquired about adoption
- Individuals with no experience of adoption

Although the survey was aimed at Black individuals, five respondents selected that they were white or white British, and four people preferred not to give their ethnicity. Survey comments suggest that some of the white respondents had adopted Black children.

# What can we understand from adoption and population data?

**The research looked at existing data sets in a different way, asking critical questions about the data through the lens of race and ethnicity.**

An analysis of ASGLB data from the 23 boroughs that were part of **Adopt London** in 2021/22 was undertaken[22], alongside analysis of publicly available adoption and population data, such as national census data. This section of the report explores the disparities in experiences and outcomes for Black children in the adoption system, looks at the number of Black adoptive households available and their experiences in the adoption process, and considers what other related data may tell us about the adoption system. All references to adoption data are taken from ASGLB data submissions; children's data covered the 5 years 2016/17 – 2021/22, and adoptive parent's data covered the 3 years from 2018/19 – 2021/22. Key terms used are outlined in the appendix. The process maps below show the key steps in the adoption process that are used within data reporting and referenced in this report.



# Are Black children over-represented in care and adoption systems?

**In England there are 'extreme inequalities between ethnic groups in the proportions of children being looked after in care[23]'. According to research published by the Nuffield Foundation[24], although poverty is associated with increased numbers of children in care, the disproportionate representation of Black children in the care system is unlikely to be explained by poverty alone.**

Relative to the size of each ethnic group's population, Black and mixed heritage children are much more likely to be in care than children from other ethnic groups, with Black Caribbean children being most likely to be in care across all levels of neighbourhood deprivation[25]. The research found that Black Caribbean children were 20 times more likely to be in care than white British children, and 'amongst 16 and 17 year olds, 1 Black Caribbean child in 30 was in care, compared to 1 in 100 white British children'.[26]

Why there are persistent disparities in social care outcomes for children of Black ethnicity is complex and varied, with differences attributed to a range of factors from structural inequalities such as deprivation[28], racism[29], and'… little attention being paid to ethnic inequalities in children's services by researchers and policymakers…[30], to interpersonal factors, such as practitioner behaviour and attitudes[31]. Nationally, there is increasing recognition of a need to continue to build evidence in children's social care to help bring greater understanding of this issue[32,33],and enable effective solutions to be developed.

The proportion of children looked after as a percentage of the population differs across ethnic groups and across England (**table 1**). The data we have in this area helps us understand the levels of disproportionate representation of children from some ethnic groups within the care system in England and gives a rudimentary, but important, indication of how easily potential adopters of the same ethnicities as children in care can be recruited in different parts of the country. For ethnic groups where there is a lower number of people in the adult population per child looked after, the population pool from which potential adopters of the same ethnic background can be drawn is smaller.

In London, there are 396 adults of Black ethnicity per 1 child looked after of Black ethnicity, second lowest only to those categorised as 'mixed' ethnicity (many of whom may be Black mixed ethnicity), of which there are 225 adults per child looked after. This compares starkly to proportions within other ethnic groups – for example, 1417 adults of white ethnicity per child looked after of white ethnicity, and 1482 adults of Asian ethnicity per child looked after of Asian ethnicity. Notably, the number of adults of Black ethnicity in the population for every 1 child looked after of Black ethnicity is low across all regions of England.

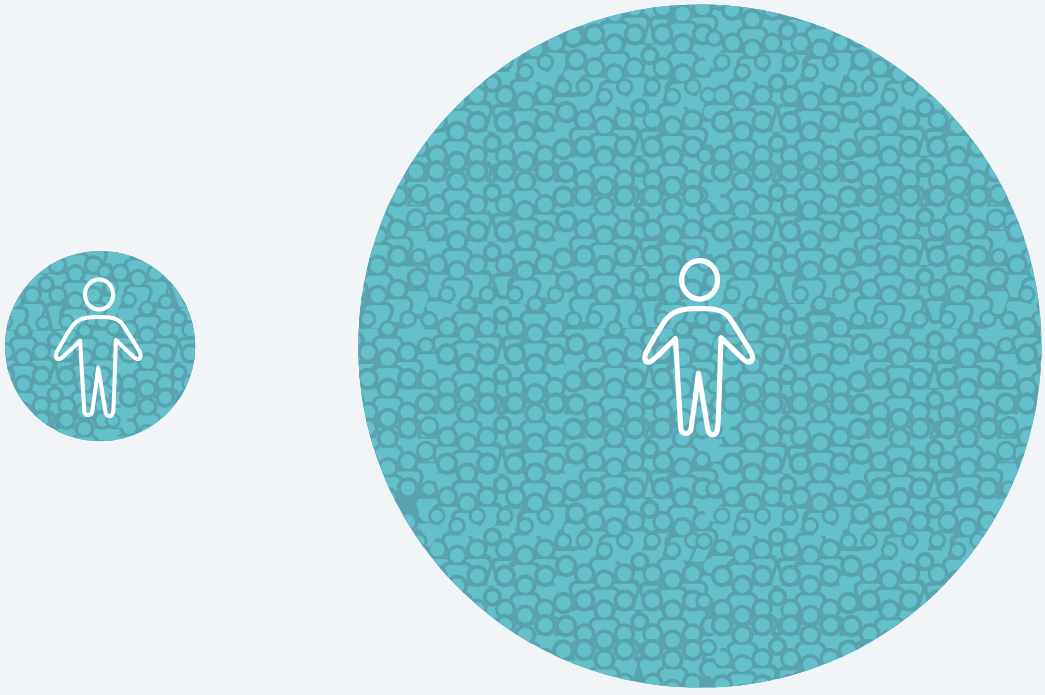
**Black children are over-represented in the care system in England, and this disproportionality cannot be explained by poverty alone. Black Caribbean children were 20 times more likely to be in care than white British children.[27]**

**In relation to the size of the population in London, there is an over-representation of Black children in care. For every 1 Black child looked after in London there are 396 Black adults in the population, whereas for every 1 white child looked after in London there are 1417 white adults in the population.[34]**

The proportion of people of Black ethnicity in the population differs across London boroughs, with people of Black ethnicity making up 27.2% of the population in Lewisham compared to 1.5% of the population in Richmond (table 2). Across London, people of Black ethnicity make up 13.3% of the total population and those who identify as being 'mixed or multiple ethnic groups' (including 'white & Black Caribbean', and 'white & Black African' but also including other non-Black ethnic categories) make up 5% of the total population[35]. Even when 'Black' and 'mixed' ethnic categories are taken together, the total London population in these categories is 18.3%. This suggests that children of Black ethnicity, who made up 25.8% of the children placed for adoption by **Adopt London** (table 3), may be over-represented in the adoption system in London.

This data raises many complex concerns and questions about why and how Black children are over-represented in the care and adoption systems. Within the scope of this phase of the **Black Adoption Project**, the over-representation of Black children also has a practical and direct impact on the ability of adoption agencies to recruit Black adoptive parents, and therefore the likelihood of Black children with an adoption plan growing up within a Black family.

**Compared to other ethnicities, adoption agencies in London need to over-recruit adopters from the Black population to ensure there are enough adopters for Black children with an adoption plan.**



**396**
Black adults in London population
for every **1** Black child looked after

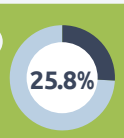
**1,417**
white adults in London population
for every **1** white child looked after

# What proportion of the Black children placed for adoption in England are in **Adopt London** boroughs?

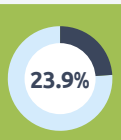
**Adopt London** place a much higher proportion of children of Black ethnicity for adoption than other areas of England. Across the **Adopt London** boroughs over the 5-year period considered, **25.8%** of all children placed for adoption in **Adopt London** boroughs were Black or mixed Black ethnicity, compared to **6.4%** of all children placed for adoption in England

Although there is a wide range across agencies (from 12.9% of the children placed by **Adopt London** East, to 35.4% of the children placed by **Adopt London** North), all **Adopt London** agencies placed children of Black ethnicity at a significantly higher rate than the national average (table 3).

In the 5 years considered, 23.9% of all children of Black ethnicity placed for adoption in England were in **Adopt London** boroughs (267 out of a total of 1119 children). This is despite **Adopt London** accounting for only 5.9% of all children placed for adoption nationally.

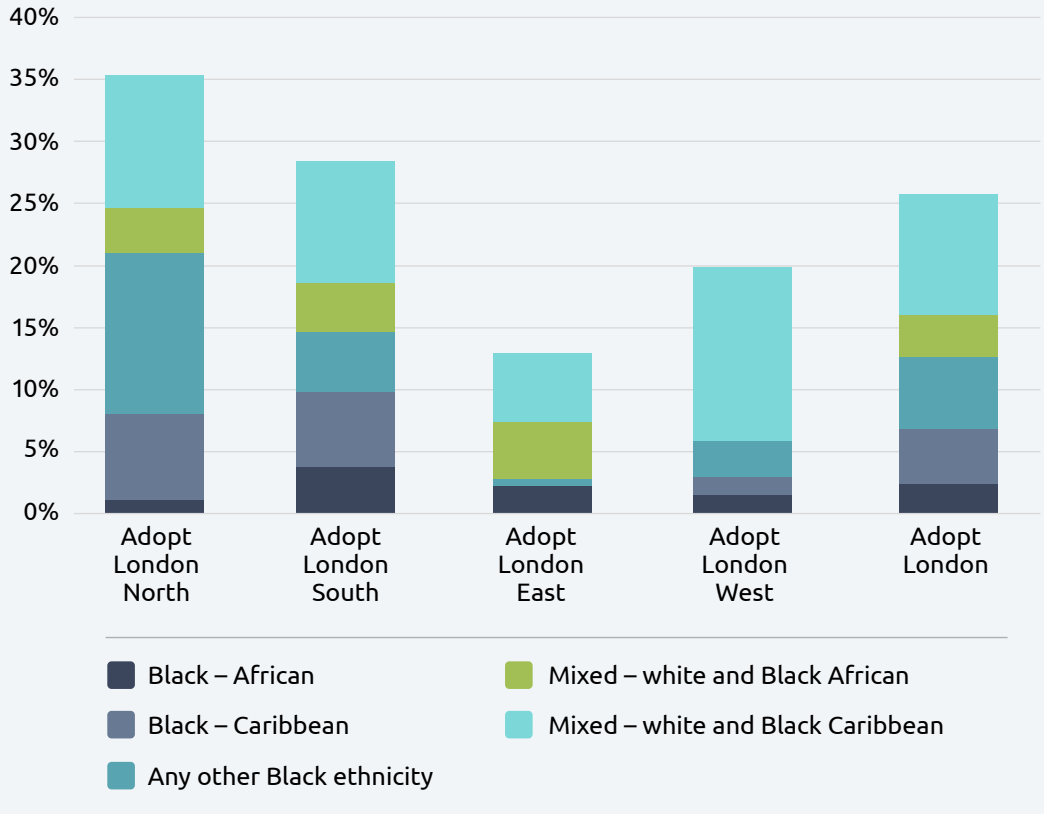



**25.8%** of children placed for adoption by Adopt London were Black, compared to **6.4%** of the children placed for adoption in England.




**23.9%** of all Black children placed for adoption in England were from Adopt London boroughs.

## Black children placed for adoption as a proportion of all children placed for adoption



# Does ethnicity impact on the likelihood of a child with a plan for adoption going on to be adopted?

**Within our analysis we looked at several different ways of understanding the impact of ethnicity on whether a child with a plan for adoption goes on to be adopted.**

Both nationally and in **Adopt London**, just over 40% of the children of Black ethnicity who had an adoption plan made in the 5 years between 2016/17 and 2020/21 had been placed for adoption by the end of March 2021. This compares to 63% of children of white ethnicity placed nationally and 50% of children of white ethnicity placed in Adoption London. Within this, children of Black African ethnicity were the least likely to have been placed for adoption within the period; 36% placed within **Adopt London**, 39% placed in England (table 4).

We also looked within the data for **Adopt London** at where in the process children's plans for adoption were most likely to change. We found that approximately 65% of all plans changed between the decision that adoption should be the care plan and the Placement Order being made by the court, and around 33% changed between the Placement Order and the decision to match the child with adoptive parents. We know from practice that many of the changes of plan before a Placement Order are likely to be due to factors within the care proceedings, or because of court decisions. A plan that is changed after a Placement Order is granted is more likely to be due to difficulties identifying an adoptive family that can meet the child's needs, and/or change in what is known about the child's needs.

We compared the characteristics of the children who had their plan changed before a Placement Order to the children who had their plan changed after a Placement Order and found that children of a Black African or Black Caribbean ethnicity were 3 – 3.5 times more likely to have their plan changed after a Placement Order compared to children from other ethnic groups. The only factor more significant than ethnicity was disability, where we found that children with a disability were 7 times more likely to have their plan changed after a Placement Order compared to children with no disability (table 5).

We looked at the reason codes used in the data by boroughs for children's changes in plan. We found that Black Caribbean children in **Adopt London** were 12 times more likely than other children to have 'prospective adopters could not be found' given as the reason for the change. When the same data is considered for England, we see that Black Caribbean children were only 3 times more likely to have this given as the reason for a change of plan, therefore the **Adopt London** rate is much higher than the national rate. This difference is likely impacted by the larger number of children of Black ethnicity that Adopt London boroughs are responsible for, making national difficulties in placing children of Black ethnicity more acute in **Adopt London**.

Black children were around **20%** less likely to have been successfully placed for adoption than children of other ethnicities within the period analysed.

Black African and Black Caribbean children were **3–3.5 times** more likely to have their plan changed away from adoption after a Placement Order was granted rather than before a Placement Order was granted, suggesting that the change of plan was more likely to be influenced by difficulties identifying an adoptive family than by care planning and court decisions.

Black Caribbean children were **12 times** more likely than other children to have 'prospective adopters could not be found' provided as the reason for the change in their care plan away from adoption.

# Do adoption timescales differ for Black children?

**Using Adopt London data for the 5-year period analysed we looked at the timescales for children from the point of becoming looked after to moving in with their adoptive family (most of their care journey). We considered whether children of Black ethnicity had different adoption timescales to children of other ethnicities when other influencing factors (such as sibling groups, disability, age) remain constant.**

We found that on average Black African children experienced 247 days longer in the adoption process (approximately 8 months), Black Caribbean children 238 days longer (over 7 ½ months), and children recorded as 'other Black ethnicities' 203 days longer (over 6 ½ months). The significant impact that being of Black ethnicity had on children's adoption timescales was similar when looking at national data. The only factor that was more significant for children's timescales than this was having a disability, which added on average 359 days to their adoption process (11 ½ months). It is likely therefore that these delays will be further compounded for children of Black ethnicity that also have a disability.

**When other factors are held constant, Black children spent on average 6½ – 8 months longer in the adoption process before moving in with their adoptive family.**

When looking at the different stages of the adoption process, we found that children of Black ethnicity on average spent 84 – 92 days longer in care before an ADM decision for adoption was made. There was no significant difference in the timescales between ADM decision and a Placement Order being granted by the court. The most significant difference in timescales was found after Placement Order, when Black Caribbean children waited an average of 180 days longer before being matched with an adoptive family (almost 6 months). The data also showed that there were some differences in the timescales for children to move in with their adoptive family after a matching decision – with children of Black ethnicity moving on average around 49 – 52 days after the matching decision, compared to an average of 26 days for white children. There was no significant difference in timescales between moving in with the adoptive family and an Adoption Order being granted – this means that once Black children are living with their adoptive family, they are no more likely to experience delays than children of other ethnicities.

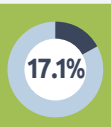
**The most significant delays for Black children in the adoption process occur in the Family Finding stage, after a Placement Order is granted but before a matching decision is made; children of Black Caribbean ethnicity waiting almost 6 months longer than other children in this stage of the process.**

Adoption research tells us that children who have experienced delays in decision-making, or who were placed over the age of four years old, are more likely to experience a disruption in their adoptive family[36]. Therefore, delays during the adoption process are likely to directly impact children who go on to be placed for adoption and those where a decision is made for a change of care plan.

# How many Black prospective adoptive parents does **Adopt London** recruit?

**Our analysis of this area covered three years of adoption data from 2018/19 – 2020/21 as there were data collection changes from 2018/19 which impacted the quality of adopter recruitment data available prior to this.**

When looking at individual prospective adopters (not households) who were approved in this period, we see that across England 88.8% of all adopters were from a white ethnic group, compared to 2.8% of adopters from a Black or mixed Black ethnic group (table 6). Within **Adopt London** there were a significantly larger proportion of adopters of Black ethnicity at 17.1%, compared to 68.5% adopters of white ethnicity. Despite **Adopt London** recruiting adopters overall at relatively low levels to other parts of the country and accounting for only 3.9% of all adopters approved nationally in this period, almost a quarter (24.5%) of all adopters of Black ethnicity approved in England were approved by **Adopt London**.




**17.1%** of prospective adopters approved within **Adopt London** were from a Black or mixed Black ethnic group, compared to **2.8%** nationally. Although **Adopt London** recruit a relatively low number of adopters, nearly a quarter of all Black adopters approved nationally in the period were within Adopt London.

We looked separately at the number of households approved where there were only parents of Black or mixed Black ethnicity (i.e., in a single household there was one person of Black ethnicity and in a couple household both partners were of Black ethnicity), as these households are most likely to adopt children from Black backgrounds who are not of mixed ethnicity (table 7). We found a similar pattern but the difference between **Adopt London** and the national picture was even wider, with **Adopt London** approving over a third (36%) of all households of Black ethnicity nationally during the period. 13% of households approved by **Adopt London** were of Black ethnicity, compared to 1.4% across England. The pattern was also similar when looking at households with at least one adoptive parent of Black or mixed Black ethnicity (table 8), where we found 21.1% in **Adopt London** compared to 3.9% nationally.

**36%** of all only-Black adoptive households approved nationally were in Adopt London.

**Adopt London** has been recruiting proportionately more adopters of Black ethnicity than other areas of the country, and the proportion of households with at least one parent of Black or mixed Black ethnicity (21.1%) was similar to the proportion of children of Black or mixed Black ethnicity with adoption plans (25.8%) over this period. Similarly, when looking at numbers rather than proportions, **Adopt London** had recruited 140 households with at least one parent of Black ethnicity during the period (2018/19 - 2020/21) and this matched closely with the 139 children of Black and mixed Black ethnicity placed for adoption in the same period. The number of children of Black ethnicity who had plans for adoption in the same period was not reviewed within this research phase, however, there is intention to look at this further in the next phase of work. When we look at the same data for white households approved (392) and white children placed (298) we see that there are significantly more adoptive parents approved than are needed for the children placed and this is likely to have impacted the speed and choice available during the Family Finding process, enabling children to be matched with the most appropriate family in the quickest timescales.

# What does population data tell us about recruiting Black adopters?

**In London, people from Black and other minoritised ethnic backgrounds make up 46.2% of the total population, and 13.5% of the population are from Black ethnic groups, the largest proportions in England[36].**

Table 9 presents the population of London's local authorities by ethnicity. The data shows that one-third of London boroughs (11) account for 62% of Black populations, and up to 28% of Black populations are concentrated in just four **Adopt London** South boroughs (Lambeth, Southwark, Lewisham, and Croydon).

Population data indicates that adoption recruitment activity could be more **effective** if targeted in boroughs with the highest Black populations.

Nationally, and in London, families of Black ethnicity experience racism and other intersecting forms of discrimination, evidenced by longstanding inequalities such as unequal pay, housing disadvantage and experiences of deprivation[38]:

- Households of Black ethnicity are most likely out of all ethnic groups to have an average weekly income of less than £600[39].
- 19.8% of Black ethnic groups in the country live in the most income-deprived 10% of neighbourhoods, the highest of all ethnic groups[40].
- 12.4% of people of Black ethnicity live in the most employment- deprived areas of the country, the highest of any ethnic group[41].

**Cannot afford a spare room**

**(survey respondent)**

**Decided adoption was not for me at this particular time due to housing**

**(survey respondent)**

The adopter eligibility criteria and prospective adopter assessment process require consideration of available space within the home and a stable income and are therefore likely to disproportionately prevent families of Black ethnicity, impacted by such discriminatory factors, from adopting. This reality was reflected in online survey responses during this research; housing and finances featured as factors that led to respondent withdrawal and/or exclusion from the adoption process.

These inequalities are likely to be compounded for people from Black ethnic groups subject to multiple, intersecting forms of discrimination and oppression such as women, disabled people, and younger people[42]. These groups experience greater socioeconomic disparities than people of Black ethnicity that benefit from intersecting systemic advantage[43].

The adopter eligibility criteria and assessment process are likely to reinforce **racism and racial bias** and prevent populations of Black ethnicity from adopting at a disproportionately high rate.

# Do timescales differ for Black prospective adopters in the adoption assessment and matching process?

**We looked at the data to consider whether there were significant differences in timescales to complete the adoption process for prospective adopters of different ethnicities.**

Within **Adopt London**, timescales for completing the process for applicants of different ethnicities and household structures were fairly consistent, with no statistically significant differences or trends – this was true both for the overall process and for the individual parts of the process.

It is notable however, that households of Black ethnicity did not experience shorter timescales after approval to have a child placed with them, something that might be expected given the shortage of adopters of Black ethnicity and the number of children of Black ethnicity with adoption plans. This requires further exploration in the next phase of research.

**The ethnicity of adoption applicants did not appear to be a significant factor in how long their adoption process took. It might be expected that households of Black ethnicity would have a child placed with them more quickly than other households after approval, but this was not the case.**

# When Black prospective adopters start the assessment process, how likely are they to go on to adopt a child?

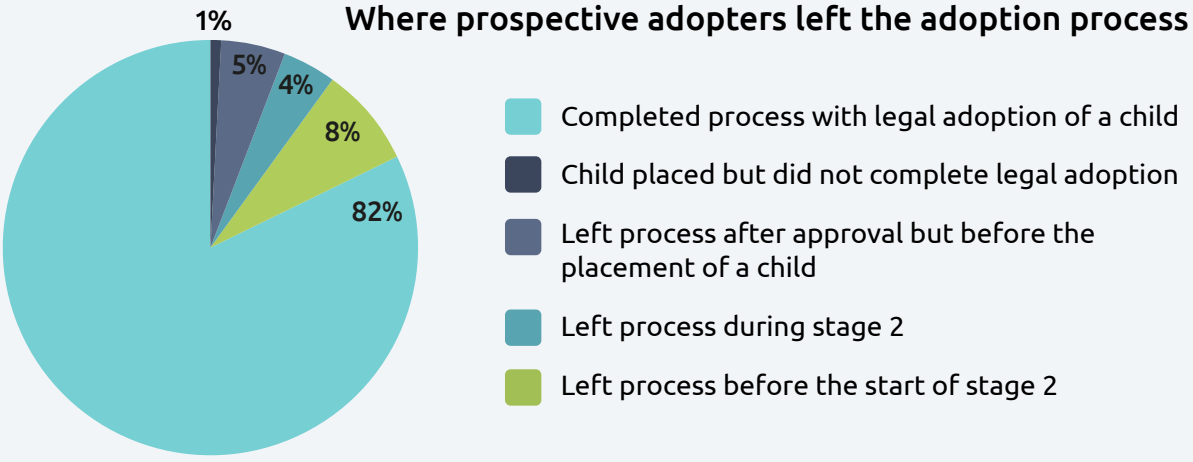
**Within the data period considered, 82% of all prospective adopters in Adopt London who started the assessment process went on to complete the process with the legal adoption of a child. The remaining 18% left the adoption process at varying stages, most during the assessment (8% between Registration of Interest and the start of stage 2, and 4% during stage 2).**

The data on family structure showed that only 66% of single prospective adopters completed the process with the adoption of a child, and so were much more likely than couples to leave during the assessment, with 10% leaving prior to stage 2 starting, 10% during stage 2, and 10% after approval but before a child is placed. Same-sex couples were even more likely to complete the process with the adoption of a child than heterosexual couples (87% compared to 82%). Our practice experience suggests that a significant number of applicants of Black ethnicity are single women; this data therefore needs to be explored further to understand the intersection of ethnicity and family structure.

**Single adoption applicants overall were 17% more likely than couples to leave the adoption process before the adoption of a child. This data needs to be examined further to understand the intersection between ethnicity and family structure.**

The ethnicity of the prospective adopter did also appear to impact the likelihood of them going on to successfully adopt a child. When compared to households of white-only ethnicity, households of Black-only ethnicity were around 5 – 6 times more likely to leave the process during stage 2 of the assessment rather than going on to complete the adoption process with an Adoption Order for a child. However, the disparity was even higher for households of Asian-only ethnicity, who were 10 times more likely to leave during stage 2. We do not know the reasons for these disparities; further research is required.

**Households of Black-only ethnicity were around 5 – 6 times more likely than white-only households to leave the adoption process without adopting a child.**



# What can we understand from the perceptions and experiences of Black communities and adopters?

**A survey and series of focus groups were undertaken to enhance and enrich our data analysis.**

An online survey aimed at Black communities living in London was conducted in April 2022, in addition to semi-structured focus groups with London-based Black people with different experiences of adoption during April and May 2022. Thematic analysis, in which key themes from survey and interview texts were identified, analysed, and interpreted, were grouped into three broad themes – factors encouraging and enabling adoption by Black families; factors discouraging, and hindering adoption by Black families; and indicators of key perceptions held by Black communities.

These research methods involved a small number of self-selecting participants, and as a result, findings cannot be generalised to reflect Black communities at large, however, the analysed responses are taken as a collection of views that provide insight into perceptions and experiences of adoption that are potentially held by a broader range of Black people. This section of the report outlines survey respondent demographic insights the emerging themes.

## Survey respondents

Of the demographic information provided by just over half of all respondents:

- Most London-based respondents were from the boroughs of Croydon, Enfield, and Lewisham (34%).
- Almost 65% of respondents selected that they were Christian (n=113) with a further 28% (n=49) selected that they did not practice a religion.
- The majority of respondents had a household income of £40,000 - £80,000 (33%), followed by over £80,000 (25%) and £20,000 to £40,000 (24%).
- Almost half of respondents identified as Black Caribbean (49%) and 30% as Black African.
- Just over two thirds of respondents were born in the UK (68%), and just under one third had lived in the UK for 10 years or more (28%).
- The majority of respondents were heterosexual (86%), and 9% identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual.
- Most respondents identified as women (86%).
- Most respondents had a level 7 qualification (37%), followed by just over two thirds with a level 5/6 qualification (34%).

The majority of respondents were individuals with no experience of adoption (46%), followed by adoptive parents (26%), prospective adopters (16.5%) and individuals that had previously enquired about adoption but not progressed (11.5%).

Half of respondents with no experience of adoption had considered adoption, and half had not. Of those that had not considered adoption, when asked why, the top 3 responses were that they were not sure why (15%), did not earn enough (15%) or don't know what the adoption process would be (15%).

Although this data cannot be generalised, it provides useful insight into communities where opportunities for generating and/or converting interest in adoption may lie.

# What factors encourage and enable Black families to adopt?

**Most survey respondents considered adoption because they wanted to help a child of a similar ethnic background (51%). This was echoed by some focus group participants who felt strongly that race and ethnicity was an intrinsic part of their decision to adopt.**

Although ethnicity was a motivating factor for many respondents, it was not a motivating factor for all individuals. A significant proportion of survey respondents wanted to help any child (35%), and others were primarily motivated to adopt owing to not being able to have their own children due to fertility problems, being single, or a same-sex couple. Some focus group participants also felt that ethnicity was not a factor in adoption, although those who had no experience of adoption were more likely to feel this way.

My wife is white, so we just wanted to obviously look for a child that was mixed. ...things like Linkmaker [online secure system used to link adopters and children], you'll probably find down the road that it's not designed for people like us. And it's incredibly difficult... being Black is just this huge umbrella. So, it will encompass the whole of Africa, the whole of the West Indies. Whereas if you look and you see you'll see people from Spain, you'll see people from Portugal and you'll get a breakdown. But you don't get a breakdown if you're Black. And we all know that there's such a rich, diverse culture... even if you look at Asian children you'll see breakdowns, you'll see that they're Bangladeshi, you'll see that they're Urdu or whatever. For Black, it's very limited.

**(Focus group 3)**

I think for us as well, ethnicity, we would prefer to adopt a Black or mixed-race child. For me, for me biggest reason is that it tends to be Black children who are not adopted. I'm not saying that they can't thrive if they're not in a ... because they will have somebody to identify with around them...

**(Focus group 3)**

...if we're adopting, it's a long-term commitment. And you would naturally want to have children who are very much similar to our background for many reasons. And one of the reasons... if a child looks so different ...some people want to say: is that your child? And sometimes it can open up all kinds of worms that you need to explain...

**(Focus group 3)**

Well, I need guidance based on the character of the child,...what is important is the personality...but less of ethnicity.

**(Focus group 2)**

Well, when it comes to [adoption], I'm not biased, I'm not a racist. So, it doesn't really matter. It could be a Black child; it could be white. I don't really care about [ethnicity].

**(Focus group 2)**

To me, it's just to love a child. I don't care whether it's white, green, or yellow, but the reality is, as everybody has said, it has to be a child that is close to your ethnicity because questions will be asked and then emotions will be up in the air when people stare at you in the street... And then you have to start explaining to friends... and things like that when you go out. So, for me, it's just reality to have a mixed-race child or African Caribbean, whatever is close to what I look like.

**(Focus group 3)**

Ethnicity can be a **motivating factor** in deciding to adopt, however, this is not always the case, and for some perspective Black adopters, this is irrelevant.

# What factors discourage and hinder Black families from adopting?

**Four clear themes emerged from the research in this area – (1) there are financial barriers to adoption, (2) challenges within the adoption process, (3) a need for support, including culturally informed support, and (4) the impact of racism cannot be ignored.**

## Factor 1: Financial barriers

Black adopters shared that financial pressures caused some anxiety, especially regarding unexpected health costs of their adopted child. When asked what barriers to adoption should be prioritised, participants stated that economic barriers should be addressed first. Specific examples of financial assistance mentioned in focus groups and adopter conversations include:

- Mortgage payment support
- Donated toys and clothes
- Vouchers for teenage sports activities and trips
- Help to decorate children's bedrooms
- Hospital and health costs, including dentist
- School uniform and equipment costs
- Subsidised petrol costs for the first year of adoption

The financial barriers faced by many Black adopters stem from a range of complex issues, which for many, will be underpinned by racism, and other intersecting systems of oppression, such as housing[44], employment[45], pay[46], and healthcare[47]. Participants outlined several advantages of greater financial assistance, including opening adoption to more families with a lower income, enabling families to spend disposable income on developmental activities for the child, and standardising the financial support offered across the region.

**Greater financial assistance would help mitigate the impact of financial barriers and inequalities faced by families of Black ethnicity due to racism and other intersecting forms of oppression and discrimination.**

## Factor 2: Challenges within the adoption process

The adoption process was described as lengthy and challenging by both survey respondents and focus group participants; support is crucial to helping people get through, feel heard and understood, and direct their concerns. During focus groups, adopters, and those in the process of adopting highlighted important differences between the support expected from professionals versus a peer group, as described in (**table 11**). A professional understanding was characterised by the provision of formal guidance and signposting, in contrast to informal peer support which was characterised by personal exchanges.

Survey respondents also highlighted a desire for more interaction and support during the adoption process (**chart 1**). For example, almost a third (30%) of respondents stated that they weren't able to speak to other Black adopters during the adoption process but had wanted to – the highest response rate for the question (**chart 2**). Furthermore, survey questions about adopter ability to discuss ethnic and cultural needs, adoption staff understanding of Black children's needs, and adopter ability to discuss all needs received average 'neutral scores from respondents (**chart 3**).

A theme of institutional dominant-identity normativity (i.e., white, heterosexual, couples) also emerged from survey comments; several respondents commented on a lack of identity-based representation, acknowledgement, understanding, and support in their adoption journey. Greater gender and socioeconomic diversity among social workers, in addition to ethnic diversity, were also named as important areas for consideration.

Developing a better understanding of the diversity of racialised Black communities within London requires further attention. The impact of intersecting oppressions and marginalisation compounds barriers to adoption for this group. Prioritising and embedding practices that centre anti-racism, cultural humility[48] and intersectionality will be of paramount importance for the **Black Adoption Project**.

**Professional and peer adoption support that recognises and responds to intersecting identities and needs is important at all stages of the adoption process.**

> **[My experience] has not been pleasant. Too many assumptions made that professionals should simply address/ ask about. I don't like this App approach, which takes out the support element during stage 1. Incredible that there is a supposed shortage of BAME families to adoption and yet the process feels long, unnecessarily bureaucratic etc. I also don't see why assessment of me (single, Black, female carer) should take exactly the same time as assessment of a couple when the dox are doubled. How can you support and encourage single, Black females to adopt?**
>
> **(Survey respondent)**

> **It was apparent the eligibility criteria was not stacked in my favour as a single person. This was not made clear but different requirements that I could not fulfil made it impossible for me to proceed. I was told by a LA authority of an unwritten rule that means no agency / LA or social worker will place a child with me at my age. The truth is this was more or less my experience as I was unable to get through the different hurdles as a single person**
>
> **(Survey respondent)**

## Factor 3: The need for support, including culturally informed support, after adoption

There was agreement in focus group 1 (successful adopters) and a theme amongst survey responses, that post-adoption support was lacking. Parenting advice, counselling and trauma support, health advice, support for children with disabilities and complex needs, and financial assistance were all mentioned. There was a question of why there is ongoing financial support available for foster parents but not adoptive parents, and why single, Black adopters were not prioritised for support considering the numbers of Black children in need of adoption.

In the case of counselling and trauma support, the impact of racial trauma, childhood adversities and other forms of intersecting oppressions impacting Black children and adults in the UK is poorly understood. The UK Trauma Council developed a definition of Complex Trauma for the 2022 Independent Review of Children's Social Care, that explicitly refers to racism and highlights the associated risks:

> **The UK Trauma Council defines complex trauma as traumatic experiences involving multiple events with interpersonal threats during childhood or adolescence. Such events may include abuse, neglect, interpersonal violence, community violence, racism, discrimination, and war. Complex trauma is associated with significantly increased risk of poorer mental health and social outcomes – even more so compared with non-complex forms of trauma...**[49]

The consequences of cultural incompetence in therapeutic support must therefore be considered by the **Project**. This includes the risk of negative cognitive, psychological, physiological, and interpersonal outcomes for Black children and families accessing therapies[50,51], and the harmful and emotionally devastating impact of overlooking identity in counselling[52]. Professional therapies for Black children and adopters should be responsive to these identities and experiences[53, 54] and culturally derived and/or appropriate alternatives made available[55,56].

> **Post-adoption support is lacking across a broad range of areas.**

> **I only interacted with white professionals during the process until panel and I don't think they understood or tried to understand my cultural views**
>
> **(Survey comment)**

> **At the back of our mind initially, we wonder if these things would be held against us, right?**
>
> **(Focus group participant)**

> **And so I think a potential challenge that Black adopters will have is a lot of our children will have issues, obviously, as they grow up and are we open as a culture to put them through counselling or therapy as something really natural.**
>
> **(Focus group participant)**

## Factor 4: The impact of racism

It would be remiss not to highlight the issue and impact of racism in the UK in this report. Racism is understood to be not just a product of interpersonal bias or prejudice, but something embedded in institutions and systems within society that perpetuates discrimination and disadvantage for Black and global majority ethnic groups[57]. Racism is widely documented as operating at structural, institutional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal levels in the UK[58], all of which shape the picture of adoption for Black children, families, and communities.

Anecdotal examples of racial bias from social workers, family members and Black communities were shared by participants, which can have both a direct and indirect impact on adoption.

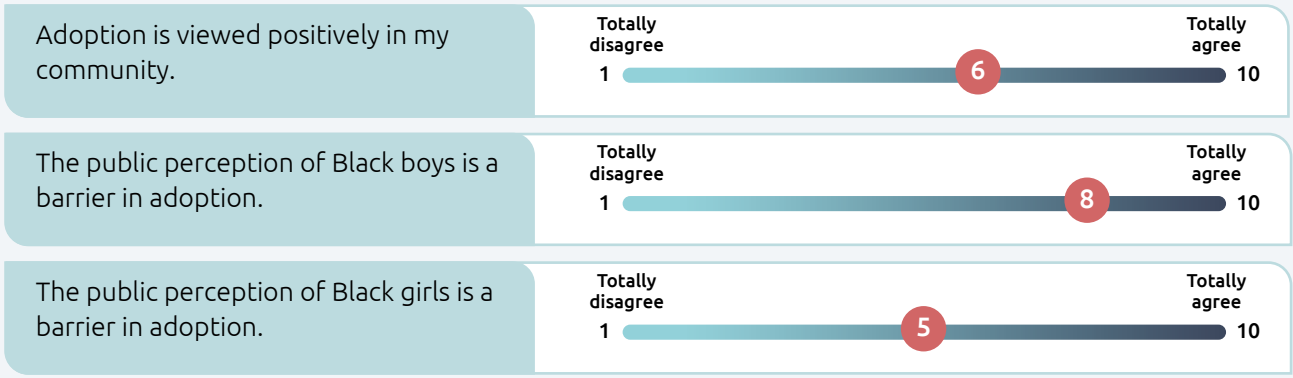
> **They've mentioned those kinds of statistics before. So that's how we know [that Black boys are last to be adopted]. And then in terms of how it kind of makes us feel, I guess it's just kind of sad that that's the reality of how things are in adoption, in the care system. And I guess it kind of just maybe. It reflects society's kind of view of Black males and things like that. Yeah. I don't think it helps the view of how Black men are perceived, because when we spoke to social worker who's also Black, she said often it's that Black boys are boys until they turn to Black men and then they become big and scary, et cetera. And that's kind of the view, I guess, that most people have.**
>
> **(Focus group 3)**

> **This huge umbrella Black culture. And that, you know, being Black isn't this huge thing. It's about there are nuances, there are differences. When you use the word, Black, as I said, that encompasses Caribbeans, Africans and so much more. And I think if they have a better understanding of what that actually means, I think we would be able to maybe entice more people into adoption.**
>
> **(Focus group 3)**

Survey responses also demonstrate the impact of racism on Black children in need of adoption, with the majority of respondents agreeing with the statements, 'the public perception of Black boys is a barrier in adoption' and 'Black children are less likely to be adopted'. Notably, the average of responses to the statement 'the public perception of Black girls is a barrier in adoption' was neutral (see **chart 6**), highlighting the importance of an intersectional[59] framework across systems and practice.

> Racism across multiple, connected, and complex levels **hinders** prospective Black adopters and the adoption of Black children.

**Chart 6 – Your perceptions of adoption** 186 respondents



# What awareness and perceptions exist about Black children in need of adoption?

**None of the focus group participants from the general public said that they had seen promotion of adoption in the media. Whilst the adopters in the groups had seen promotion for adoption, there was no strong positive feeling about it, and for some, the presence of a few Black people in the visual imagery felt to be tokenistic. There was little sense that adoption promotion specifically targeted Black communities.**

A lack of promotion and awareness also featured prominently in the survey responses, with respondents generally disagreeing with the statements 'adoption is widely promoted' and 'I feel like adoption is promoted to people like me' (chart 4). Survey respondents also commented on the stigma surrounding single adopters and this potentially being a barrier for this group.

Black communities appear to be missing an influential and respected voice that actively promotes adoption. Community leaders, faith leaders and the like, were not felt by focus group participants to be talking about adoption, and certainly not promoting it as a norm. This suggests there is a space for a positive narrative to develop and be amplified.

> **I've seen it on the back of buses... I've seen a pop up on BBC when they're talking about fostering and adopting. But I feel like you have to have it in your mind for it to pop up. I feel ...If you ask this to any of my friends, who might not have thought about adoption, they will probably say no.**
>
> **(Focus group 3)**

There was one exception to this finding, however, a good example of adoption promotion within a church setting shared by a focus group participant:

> **In our Church community, it is a very mixed community. And we have, for example, people who are foster carers. And our Church community actually has adopted. There's an agency within our Church as well. So that is where we first got the idea of adopting. So, it's it is quite something that is very well established in our Church community.**
>
> **(Focus group 3)**

A review of the **Adopt London** website[60] did not reveal any obvious partnerships or connections with local groups/organisations, or key Black individuals of influence across London to promote adoption. There is an immediate opportunity to map stakeholders of interest in the **Adopt London** regions and develop a simple plan of who and how to meaningfully engage them, with approaches rooted in the principles of equity, anti-racism, and reciprocity. The London Violence Reduction Unit[61] is an example of a public sector organisation that has focused efforts and investment in this area. They have hosted several stakeholder groups including a young people's action group, charity network, and parents / carers network, and they are developing and maintaining key relationships with the Black majority churches forum and Somali leaders.

Promotion of adoption is **not reaching far enough**. There is little sense that current promotion targets Black communities, and this is compounded by the absence of an influential and respected Black voice actively promoting adoption.

When asked about perceptions of adoption, those who had a friend or relative with an experience of adoption were more likely to have a positive view or share that they were more aware of adoption. Those with no exposure to adoption voiced more concerns and anxieties about the process, and there were fears about the needs of the children to be adopted. This suggests that positive exposure is a precursor to the development of a positive narrative.

The survey findings reinforce the focus group finding to some extent. Despite respondents' average response that they do not feel adoption is widely promoted, or promoted to 'people like me,' they did agree with the statements: 'Black children are less likely to be adopted' – an average of 8 (totally agree) and 'children that require adoption often have complex needs' – an average of 7 (agree). This could indicate that without exposure to an adoptive family or promotional materials, misconceptions about adoption may prevail that discourage people from exploring adoption.

**Exposure to adoption within one's personal life helps to create a positive view of it.**

> **My mum is a foster carer, and we know someone else did [adopt] previously. Black children, particularly Black boys, stay in the care system and that affects them throughout their lives. We've got the space and the time and the laughs. The capacity. And so, we specifically set about trying to adopt a young Black boy. Plus, I think my other half is pretty amazing, and he would be sort of a great influence for the young Black boy.**
>
> **(Focus group 3)**

Focus group and survey participants identified that taking care of children that one did not give birth to is a social norm, a cultural expectation and responsibility, and a source of family connection. There were nuances, however:

- Informal adoption within Black communities is viewed as something done within families and close communities, and therefore not requiring formal processes or the involvement of outside professionals. This includes grandchildren raised by grandparents, nieces and nephews raised by aunts and uncles, and cousins raised by cousins.
- Taking in a child from within your family or close community, where you know the background of the child, is seen as commonplace and acceptable. Taking in an unknown child was felt to be risky and less agreeable.

**Adoption has always been part of the African descent … Now religion, adoption is seen as a way of communal responsibility. And now when you move outside the inbounds of the culture and religion and gets to the actions of government … you come to understand that government does not correspond in conscience. It's not in wavelength. …There is a lot that is bureaucratic. And there's an absence of what I would say streamlined social service that will also promote it… And so, I'd say that there's a dissonance between government and cultural groups. But inside the Black community, you would say that there's a sense of promotion of responsibility, which carves adoption as a way of communal responsibility.**

**(Focus group 2)**

**When I was growing up, my house was always full of children. My mother, we used to call her that. …. So, any child that comes in, there's a plate on the table for that child. So, I think in the Black community or maybe African wise, it's embedded somewhere in the background because it takes a village to train a child. Yeah. And it's not down to the parents themselves. So, I think adoption has always been there in the Black community, somewhere with people looking after other people's children. Really.**

**(Focus group 3)**

**It also important to acknowledge publicly that people from Black backgrounds have a long history of unofficial adoptions and so it "natural" to us and we shouldn't be afraid of the adoption process.**

**(Survey respondent)**

**Yeah, I do agree that adoption is part of the African background and the churches. And the government, as far as going through the adoption process in the legal way, I think is part of the African background, that people who adopt children, people that don't have children to start their family adopt children to start a family, mostly in the African countries. So, it's mainly part of the African background.**

**(Focus group 2)**

Differences in sentiment and cultural norms among Black communities could not be elicited from the small scale of this research, for example, that of British-born families compared to migrant families. However, opportunities to create and sustain meaningful partnerships and closer working with a diverse range of Black communities across London should be explored to bridge this gap in knowledge and understanding.

**The formal process of adoption is misaligned with cultural norm of adoption within Black communities.**

# Final comments

**This report outlines important insights into the experiences and outcomes of Black children, adopters and families in adoption, an under-researched area in London, and the UK.**

Findings evidence the extent and impact of inequalities for Black children and families within the adoption process. From Black children being over-represented in the care system, to Black children being less likely to be successfully placed for adoption, to households of Black-only ethnicity being more likely not to complete the adoption assessment process, the urgent need to tackle these issues is clear.

In recent years there has been increased focus on the disparate outcomes of Black and global majority children, families and staff in children's social care. A raft of communication, activities and plans on the topic exploded across sectors following the tragic murder of George Floyd in 2020[62]; however, recent studies and insights suggest that understanding of racial issues remains limited[63], leadership commitment and action to tackle racism is varied[64] and, racial oppression and inequalities persist across systems[65].

Within the **Black Adoption Project** there is commitment to drive change across systems and practice. The wide-ranging and complex factors impacting experiences and outcomes of Black children and families in adoption need to be better understood, specifically in the context of the increasingly hostile and changing socio-political climate, evolving children's social care policy, stretched public sector workforce, funding and capacity pressures, and the deeply entrenched range of inequalities affecting Black communities. Undertaking further research will therefore remain a priority for the **Black Adoption Project**, in addition to collating the literature currently available on this topic and connecting with those working to tackle similar issues. Alongside this work, the next phase of the **Black Adoption Project** will focus on piloting and evaluating changes to practice in an attempt to improve experiences and outcomes for Black children and families, adoptees, and adoptive parents.

## Considerations

The research findings support the following considerations for the **Black Adoption Project**. They are also relevant for children's social care, policymakers, and commissioners working to achieve the best possible outcomes for children in adoption:

1. **Black children, families, and adult adoptees need systems that recognise how racism operates and intersects with other forms of oppression, across the entire adoption process.**

   The **Black Adoption Project** should take care to avoid framing ethnicity as a 'problem' and instead ensure root causes of racial inequalities are identified, and barriers to successful adoption outcomes are addressed through collaborative, multi-level solutions. Ethnicity is not the problem for Black adopters, children and families, and adoptees; racism, bias and other interconnecting oppressions are. Regardless of whether racism operates at an institutional level in policies and eligibility criteria, or interpersonal level in exchanges between family members, social workers, or anyone else, the impact is chronic outcomes for Black children and families. This should be clearly and consistently considered and communicated when tackling the issues identified in this report and throughout the **Black Adoption Project**.

2. **Project principles should be developed to ensure oppressive power dynamics and practices are avoided in all the Black Adoption Project's work.**

   Principles serve as a framework to guide systems, policies, behaviours and decision-making. They support staff and stakeholders to be clear about the Project and culture, and they inform all strategic and operational planning and delivery.[66] For example, careful attention should be paid to the language used to frame the **Black Adoption Project** and the issues disproportionately impacting Black children and families. Strengths and assets within Black communities, and the value these bring to adoption, should be recognised and amplified in communication. As an institution-led partnership project, ensuring work is rooted in collaborative, reciprocal, anti-oppressive, complexity-informed principles and values will support the alignment of behaviour and actions toward the project aims.

3. **Information and monitoring systems and processes should be developed to ensure data and insight are captured at every stage of the adoption process.**

   Data gaps should be identified, and processes put in place to enable recording and monitoring for trends over time. This should include all touch points with adopters and families to develop understanding of the issues. Two notable data gaps identified during this research phase are (1) why prospective adopters opt to not continue the assessment process and (2) the number of Black individuals who contact the agency to find out more about adoption but never enter the formal assessment process.

4. **The diverse support needs of Black prospective adopters, adoptive families, and adoptees of all ages must be better understood, and met, by Adopt London.**

   A skills and demographic analysis of the adoption workforce should be undertaken to understand regional gaps and strengths. A robust Workforce Development Strategy should also be developed to ensure a diverse and developing workforce, with consideration of the complex, pan-London, multi-system structure that **Adopt London** is.

   The **Project** should review the support needs of Black adoptive families and adoptees to inform development of an anti-racist, culturally appropriate offer, that is responsive to diverse needs. This might include a range of peer, professional and material support and culturally appropriate emotional support.

5. **Develop further research and pilot projects to build learning and evidence on systems change to sustainably address disparities in adoption for Black children and families.**

   Research suggests the following should be considered as priority areas by the **Black Adoption Project**:

   - **Practice, policies and processes review:** Equality impact assessment of adoption practice and tools, and key adoption policies and processes to pinpoint drivers of disproportionality across the system, and opportunities for innovation and change.
   - **Partnership approaches:** Explore partnership opportunities to address socio-economic barriers facing Black communities and adopters, such as via grants and donations.
   - **Further analysis and research** to learn about:
     - Perceptions and experiences of underrepresented Black adopters e.g. Black men.
     - Recording systems and processes development requirements.
   - **Bespoke co-designed learning and development programme (informed by workforce skills review – see recommendation 4)** for:
     - Adoption senior leaders and managers
     - Adoption practitioners

6. **Collaborate with communities to develop proactive, community-led approaches to adoption promotion.**

   The **Black Adoption Project** should focus on meeting communities where they are and enabling community-led adoption promotion strategies.

   Further analysis of Black communities in London and the recruitment needs of **Adopt London** should inform the **Project's** key aims and outcomes. Once developed, influential allies and ambassadors from Black communities should be sought out and invited to drive promotion and recruitment efforts using a range of online and offline methods.

7. **Explore opportunities to understand more about the medium- and long-term outcomes for Black children and adoptive families within the scope of the Project.**

   Designing, testing and implementing solutions to longstanding system issues requires an understanding of key adoption data, such as the length of time Black children spend in the adoption process. Where possible, this must include data on Black children and adoptive families experiences after an Adoption Order has been granted, in the medium and long term. Presently, there is no available data broken down by ethnicity, on the medium and long-term outcomes of adopted children and adoptive families. Understanding this will be a key measure of success for the Black Adoption Project, especially given wider system complexities, that currently include children's social care reform[67], the impact of COVID-19[68] and the cost of living crisis[69].

8. **The Project should consider responding to the current national children's social care strategy consultation with its findings, and recommendations.**

   The structural issues identified in this research as impacting adoption experiences and outcomes, will require central government-led action to be properly addressed. Current children's social care reform[70] presents a timely opportunity to explicitly name and address inequalities, including racism and socio-economic inequalities, for example. It is hoped that this opportunity is recognised and acted upon.

# Appendix

## Key definitions

**Adoption Order:** A legal order giving full parental responsibility for a child to the approved adoptive parents, made on their application to court. An Adoption Order severs the legal ties between a birth parent and the child.

**Adoption Panel:** The panel is led by an independent chair and members include social workers, those with lived experience of adoption, medical advisors, and others with professional knowledge of adoption. The panel's main responsibilities are to make recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker regarding the approval of adoptive parents and matches between a child and adoptive parents.

**Agency Decision Maker (ADM):** A senior manager in either the local authority or the Regional Adoption Agency who has responsibility for making key decisions in the adoption process including Best Interests Decisions, approval of adoptive parents, and matches between a child and adoptive parents.

**Approval decision:** A decision by the Agency Decision Maker, following a recommendation from the Adoption Panel, to approve adoptive parents after completion of a prospective adopter assessment. After approval adoptive parents can begin the process of family finding.

**Best Interests Decision / Plan for Adoption:** A decision by the Agency Decision Maker during care proceedings that adoption is the most appropriate plan for a child and is necessary, taking into consideration all the assessments and information available within the care proceedings. This decision is needed before the local authority can apply to the court for a Placement Order.

**Family finding:** The process of searching for an appropriate adoptive family for a child with an adoption care plan.

**Matching decision:** A decision by the Agency Decision Maker, following a recommendation from the Adoption Panel, to approve an adoptive placement for a particular child with particular adoptive parent/s. After a matching decision the child can be gradually introduced to the adoptive parents in preparation for moving to live with them.

**Placed for adoption:** When a child moves to live with adoptive parents following a matching decision and introductions process, but before an Adoption Order is granted.

**Placement Order:** A legal order made by the court which gives the local authority permission to place the child with adoptive parents and dispenses with the birth parents' consent for this.

**Prospective adopter assessment:** A formal assessment by an Adoption Agency of an individual or a couple, to reach a conclusion as to whether they would be suitable adoptive parents.

**Regional Adoption Agency:** An Adoption Agency that provides adoption services on behalf of its partner local authorities.

# Tables and charts

**Table 1:** The number of residents per child looked after of the same ethnicity[71]

| Region | Asian | Black | Mixed | Other | White |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| England | 1170 | 335 | 144 | 213 | 749 |
| **London** | **1482** | **396** | **225** | **461** | **1417** |
| East Midlands | 1467 | 354 | 123 | 161 | 795 |
| East of England | 1392 | 280 | 178 | 99 | 1043 |
| North East | 746 | 110 | 112 | 100 | 473 |
| North West | 742 | 181 | 97 | 143 | 506 |
| South East | 1027 | 289 | 178 | 111 | 975 |
| South West | 1055 | 381 | 163 | 98 | 938 |
| West Midlands | 1119 | 299 | 84 | 200 | 573 |
| Yorkshire and The Humber | 1103 | 335 | 98 | 178 | 626 |

**Table 2:** Black population in London by borough[72] (Table 9 provides all ethnicity data by London borough)

| London borough | % of the borough population who are Black | % of the total Black London population that live in the borough |
|---|---|---|
| Lambeth | 25.9 | 7.2 |
| Southwark | 26.9 | 7.1 |
| Lewisham | 27.2 | 6.9 |
| Croydon | 20.2 | 6.7 |
| Newham | 19.6 | 5.5 |
| Brent | 18.8 | 5.4 |
| Hackney | 23.1 | 5.2 |
| Enfield | 17.2 | 4.9 |
| Greenwich | 19.1 | 4.5 |
| Haringey | 18.8 | 4.4 |
| Waltham Forest | 17.3 | 4.1 |
| Barking & Dagenham | 20.0 | 3.4 |
| Ealing | 10.9 | 3.4 |
| Wandsworth | 10.7 | 3.0 |
| Barnet | 7.7 | 2.5 |
| Islington | 12.8 | 2.4 |
| Redbridge | 8.9 | 2.3 |
| Hammersmith & Fulham | 11.8 | 2.0 |
| Merton | 10.4 | 1.9 |
| Hillingdon | 7.3 | 1.8 |
| Harrow | 8.2 | 1.8 |
| Bexley | 8.5 | 1.9 |
| Bromley | 6.0 | 1.7 |
| Tower Hamlets | 7.3 | 1.7 |
| Camden | 8.2 | 1.7 |
| Hounslow | 6.6 | 1.5 |
| Westminster | 7.5 | 1.5 |
| Havering | 4.8 | 1.1 |
| Kensington & Chelsea | 6.5 | 0.9 |
| Sutton | 4.8 | 0.8 |
| Kingston upon Thames | 2.5 | 0.4 |
| Richmond upon Thames | 1.5 | 0.3 |
| City of London | 2.6 | 0.0 |

**Table 3:** Black children placed for adoption as a total of all children placed for adoption in the 5-year period 2016/17 – 2020/21 Appendix C provides the same data with all ethnicity codes detailed

| Ethnicity | England | Adopt London total | Adopt London East | Adopt London North | Adopt London South | Adopt London West |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Black – African | 0.6% | 2.4% | 2.3% | 1.1% | 3.7% | 1.5% |
| Black – Caribbean | 0.5% | 4.4% | 0.0% | 7.0% | 6.1% | 1.5% |
| Any other Black ethnicity | 0.7% | 5.8% | 0.5% | 12.9% | 4.9% | 2.9% |
| Mixed – white and Black African | 1.3% | 3.5% | 4.6% | 3.7% | 3.9% | 0.0% |
| Mixed – white and Black Caribbean | 3.3% | 9.7% | 5.5% | 10.7% | 9.8% | 14.0% |
| **All Black and mixed Black children** | **6.4%** | **25.8%** | **12.9%** | **35.4%** | **28.4%** | **19.9%** |

**Table 4:** The proportion of children who had a plan for adoption made between 2016/17 and 2020/21 who were placed for adoption by the end of March 2021

| | England | | Adopt London | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Asian – Bangladesh | 75% | | 63% | |
| Asian – Indian | 68% | 66% | 88% | 69% |
| Any other Asian background | 57% | | 47% | |
| Asian – Pakistani | 62% | | 78% | |
| Black – African | 39% | | 36% | |
| Black – Caribbean | 43% | 43% | 41% | 41% |
| Any other Black background | 47% | | 47% | |
| White – British | 66% | | 56% | |
| White – Irish | 68% | | 0% | |
| White – Traveller of Irish heritage | 60% | 63% | 65% | 50% |
| Any other White background | 66% | | 67% | |
| White – Gypsy/Roma | 53% | | 63% | |
| Any other mixed background | 66% | | 64% | |
| Mixed – White and Asian | 65% | 65% | 66% | 71% |
| Mixed – White and Black African | 67% | | 96% | |
| Mixed – White and Black Caribbean | 60% | | 57% | |
| Chinese | 50% | – | 67% | – |
| Any other ethnic group | 64% | – | 56% | – |
| Information not yet obtained | 77% | – | 100% | – |
| Refused to provide ethnicity | 57% | – | 61% | – |

**Table 5:** Where in the adoption process children's plans changed for the 5-year period 2016/7 – 2020/21

| Disability | Ethnic group | ADM Best Interests Decision to Placement Order | Placement Order to Match | Match to Placement | Placement to Adoption Order |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| NO | Asian ethnicity | 16 | 5 | 1 | 1 |
| | Black ethnicity | 59 | 41 | 0 | 2 |
| | Chinese ethnicity | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Mixed ethnicity | 67 | 23 | 1 | 0 |
| | Other ethnicity | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | White ethnicity | 124 | 49 | 1 | 4 |
| | **Total** | **268** | **118** | **3** | **7** |
| YES | Black ethnicity | 0 | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| | Mixed ethnicity | 2 | 5 | 1 | 0 |
| | White ethnicity | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| | **Total** | **7** | **18** | **1** | **0** |

**Table 6:** Ethnicities of individual prospective adopters (not households) approved in the 3-year period 2019/19 – 2020/21

| Ethnicity | England | | Adopt London | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number of Individuals | Proportion of total | Number of Individuals | Proportion of total |
| All Black and mixed Black ethnicities | 462 | 2.7% | 113 | 17.0% |
| All Asian and mixed Asian ethnicities | 832 | 4.9% | 68 | 10.2% |
| All White ethnicities | 15,175 | 88.9% | 455 | 68.5% |
| All other ethnicities | 606 | 3.5% | 28 | 4.2% |
| **TOTAL (all ethnicities)** | | **17,075** | | **664** |

**Table 7:** Approved adoptive households where there were only Black or mixed Black ethnicity parents in the 3-year period 2019/19 – 2020/21

| England | | Adopt London | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Number of Individuals | Proportion of total | Number of Individuals | Proportion of total |
| 239 | 1.4% | 86 | 13% |

**Table 8:** Approved adoptive households where there was at least one Black or mixed Black ethnicity parent in the 3-year period 2019/19 – 2020/21

| England | | Adopt London | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Number of Individuals | Proportion of total | Number of Individuals | Proportion of total |
| 666 | 3.9% | 140 | 21.1% |

## Table 9: London population by ethnicity[73]

The data is sorted by the 'Black, African, Caribbean or Black British' ethnic groups in descending order (borough with largest Black populations at the top, borough with lowest Black populations at the bottom).

| | Asian or Asian British | | Black, African, Caribbean, or Black British | | | Mixed or multiple ethnic groups | | White | | Other ethnic groups | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Borough | Number | % of borough | Number | % of borough | % of Black population | Number | % of borough | Number | % of borough | Number | % of borough |
| Lambeth | 20,938 | 6.9 | 78,542 | 25.9 | 7.2 | 23,160 | 7.6 | 173,025 | 57.1 | 7,421 | 2.4 |
| Southwark | 27,192 | 9.4 | 77,511 | 26.9 | 7.1 | 17,778 | 6.2 | 156,349 | 54.2 | 9,453 | 3.3 |
| Lewisham | 25,534 | 9.3 | 74,942 | 27.2 | 6.9 | 20,472 | 7.4 | 147,686 | 53.3 | 7,251 | 2.6 |
| Croydon | 59,627 | 16.4 | 73,256 | 20.2 | 6.7 | 23,895 | 6.6 | 200,195 | 55.1 | 6,405 | 1.8 |
| Newham | 133,895 | 43.5 | 60,256 | 19.6 | 5.5 | 13,945 | 4.5 | 89,216 | 29.0 | 10,672 | 3.5 |
| Brent | 105,986 | 34.1 | 58,632 | 18.8 | 5.4 | 15,775 | 5.1 | 112,880 | 36.3 | 17,942 | 5.8 |
| Hackney | 25,867 | 10.5 | 56,858 | 23.1 | 5.2 | 15,869 | 6.4 | 134,617 | 54.7 | 13,059 | 5.3 |
| Enfield | 34,893 | 11.2 | 53,687 | 17.2 | 4.9 | 17,183 | 5.5 | 190,640 | 61.0 | 16,063 | 5.1 |
| Greenwich | 29,894 | 11.7 | 48,655 | 19.1 | 4.5 | 12,274 | 4.8 | 159,002 | 62.5 | 4,732 | 1.9 |
| Haringey | 24,150 | 9.5 | 47,830 | 18.8 | 4.4 | 16,548 | 6.5 | 154,343 | 60.5 | 12,055 | 4.7 |
| Waltham Forest | 54,389 | 21.1 | 44,791 | 17.3 | 4.1 | 13,766 | 5.3 | 134,799 | 52.2 | 10,504 | 4.1 |
| Barking & Dagenham | 29,594 | 15.9 | 37,140 | 20.0 | 3.4 | 7,878 | 4.2 | 108,386 | 58.3 | 2,913 | 1.6 |
| Ealing | 100,439 | 29.7 | 36,860 | 10.9 | 3.4 | 15,066 | 4.5 | 165,818 | 49.0 | 20,266 | 6.0 |
| Wandsworth | 33,338 | 10.9 | 32,756 | 10.7 | 3.0 | 15,241 | 5.0 | 219,216 | 71.4 | 6,444 | 2.1 |
| Barnet | 65,918 | 18.5 | 27,431 | 7.7 | 2.5 | 17,169 | 4.8 | 228,553 | 64.1 | 17,315 | 4.9 |
| Islington | 19,034 | 9.2 | 26,294 | 12.8 | 2.4 | 13,339 | 6.5 | 140,515 | 68.2 | 6,943 | 3.4 |
| Redbridge | 116,503 | 41.8 | 24,845 | 8.9 | 2.3 | 11,456 | 4.1 | 118,646 | 42.5 | 7,520 | 2.7 |
| Hammersmith & Fulham | 16,635 | 9.1 | 21,505 | 11.8 | 2.0 | 10,044 | 5.5 | 124,222 | 68.1 | 10.087 | 5.5 |
| Merton | 36,143 | 18.1 | 20,811 | 10.4 | 1.9 | 9,334 | 4.7 | 129,606 | 64.9 | 3,799 | 1.9 |
| Hillingdon | 69,253 | 25.3 | 20,082 | 7.3 | 1.8 | 10,479 | 3.8 | 166,031 | 60.6 | 8,091 | 3.0 |
| Harrow | 101,808 | 42.6 | 19,708 | 8.2 | 1.8 | 9,499 | 4.0 | 100,991 | 42.2 | 7,050 | 2.9 |
| Bexley | 15,243 | 6.6 | 19,624 | 8.5 | 1.8 | 5,395 | 2.3 | 189,962 | 81.9 | 1.773 | 0.8 |
| Bromley | 16,067 | 5.2 | 18,686 | 6.0 | 1.7 | 10,897 | 3.5 | 260,870 | 84.3 | 2,872 | 0.9 |
| Tower Hamlets | 104,501 | 41.1 | 18,629 | 7.3 | 1.7 | 10,360 | 4.1 | 114,819 | 45.2 | 5,787 | 2.3 |
| Camden | 25,446 | 16.1 | 18,0606 | 8.2 | 1.7 | 12,322 | 5.6 | 146,055 | 66.3 | 8,455 | 3.8 |
| Hounslow | 87,257 | 34.4 | 16,813 | 6.6 | 1.5 | 10,349 | 4.1 | 130,505 | 51.4 | 9,033 | 3.6 |
| Westminster | 31,862 | 14.5 | 16,472 | 7.5 | 1.5 | 11,395 | 5.2 | 135,330 | 61.7 | 24,337 | 11.1 |
| Havering | 11,545 | 4.9 | 11,481 | 4.8 | 1.1 | 4,933 | 2.1 | 207,949 | 87.7 | 1,324 | 0.6 |
| Kensington & Chelsea | 15,861 | 10.0 | 10.333 | 6.5 | 0.9 | 8,986 | 5.7 | 112,017 | 70.6 | 11,452 | 7.2 |
| Sutton | 22,035 | 11.6 | 9,120 | 4.8 | 0.8 | 7,134 | 3.8 | 149,449 | 78.6 | 2,408 | 1.3 |
| Kingston Upon Thames | 26,152 | 16.3 | 4,021 | 2.5 | 0.4 | 6,269 | 3.9 | 119,219 | 74.5 | 4,399 | 2.7 |
| Richmond Upon Thames | 13,607 | 7.3 | 2,816 | 1.5 | 0.3 | 6,780 | 3.6 | 160,725 | 86.0 | 3,062 | 1.6 |
| City of London | 940 | 12.7 | 193 | 2.6 | 0.0 | 289 | 3.9 | 5,799 | 78.6 | 154 | 2.1 |

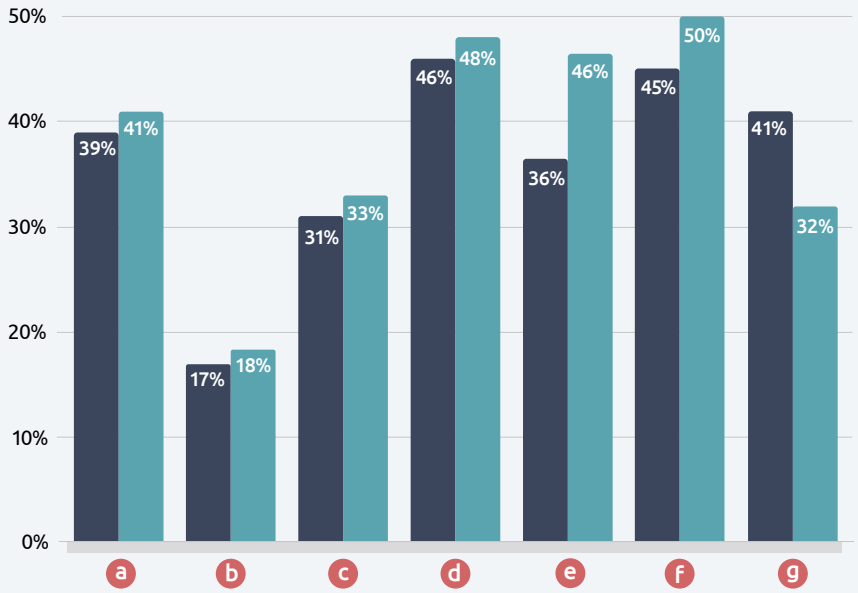
**Table 10:** Children placed for adoption by ethnicity for the 5-year period 2016/17 – 2020/21

| Ethnicity | England | Adopt London total | Adopt London East | Adopt London North | Adopt London South | Adopt London West |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Asian – Bangladeshi | 0.2% | 1.2% | 2.3% | 2.2% | 0.0% | 0.7% |
| Asian – Indian | 0.2% | 0.7% | 2.3% | 0.4% | 0.2% | 0.0% |
| Any other Asian background | 0.6% | 2.1% | 2.8% | 1.5% | 1.7% | 3.7% |
| Asian – Pakistani | 0.5% | 0.8% | 2.8% | 0.0% | 0.2% | 0.7% |
| Black – African | 0.6% | 2.4% | 2.3% | 1.1% | 3.7% | 1.5% |
| Black – Caribbean | 0.5% | 4.4% | 0.0% | 7.0% | 6.1% | 1.5% |
| Any other Black background | 0.7% | 5.8% | 0.5% | 12.9% | 4.9% | 2.9% |
| White – British | 80.0% | 42.1% | 48.2% | 34.3% | 46.9% | 33.1% |
| White – Irish | 0.2% | 0.7% | 0.5% | 1.5% | 0.2% | 0.7% |
| White – Traveller of Irish heritage | 0.2% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Any other White background | 3.2% | 9.6% | 12.8% | 7.0% | 6.6% | 18.4% |
| White – Gypsy/Roma | 0.6% | 0.4% | 0.5% | 0.0% | 0.2% | 1.5% |
| Any other mixed background | 4.0% | 12.4% | 7.8% | 15.5% | 12.0% | 14.7% |
| Mixed – White and Asian | 2.2% | 3.0% | 6.9% | 1.5% | 1.7% | 3.7% |
| Mixed – White and Black African | 1.3% | 3.5% | 4.6% | 3.7% | 3.9% | 0.0% |
| Mixed – White and Black Caribbean | 3.3% | 9.7% | 5.5% | 10.7% | 9.8% | 14.0% |
| Chinese | 0.0% | 0.2% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.5% | 0.0% |
| Any other ethnic group | 0.9% | 0.9% | 0.5% | 0.4% | 1.0% | 2.2% |
| Information not yet obtained | 0.9% | 0.3% | 0.0% | 0.4% | 0.2% | 0.7% |
| Refused to provide ethnicity | 0.1% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |

**Table 11:** Professional vs peer support

| Professional understanding | Peer support |
|---|---|
| • Formal support for queries and concerns. Non-judgemental<br>• Preparation for matching and placement of child<br>• Counselling and training in parenting | • Informal encouragement: someone to relate to<br>• People with shared experiences supporting each other<br>• Safe space to feel accepted and understood |

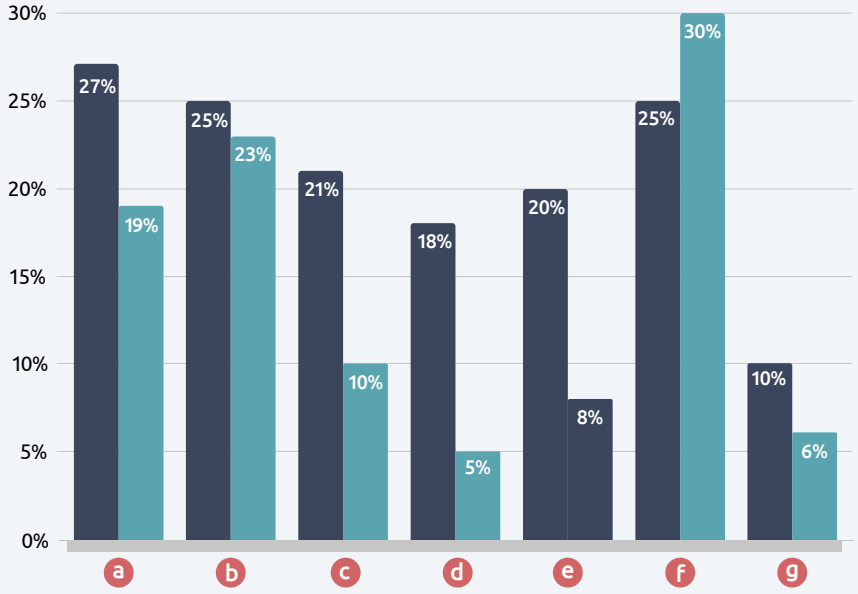
**Chart 1:** How do you feel the adoption process could be improved?




- Overall
- For Black Families

a. More emotional support
b. More support with paperwork
c. More information about process
d. More information about the children waiting to be adopted
e. More opportunities to discuss concerns
f. More interaction with a variety of adoption professionals
g. Other (Please Specify)

**Chart 2:** Did you have the opportunity to speak to others like you?




- Opportunity to speak to Black staff
- Opportunity to speak to other Black adopters

a. Yes, during the initial information gathering process
b. Yes, during the training provided
c. Yes, at assessment process
d. Yes, at Panel
e. Yes, at placement/introductions and matching stage
f. No, but I wanted to
g. No, I didn't want to

**Chart 3 – Were your needs understood and discussed?** 131 respondents

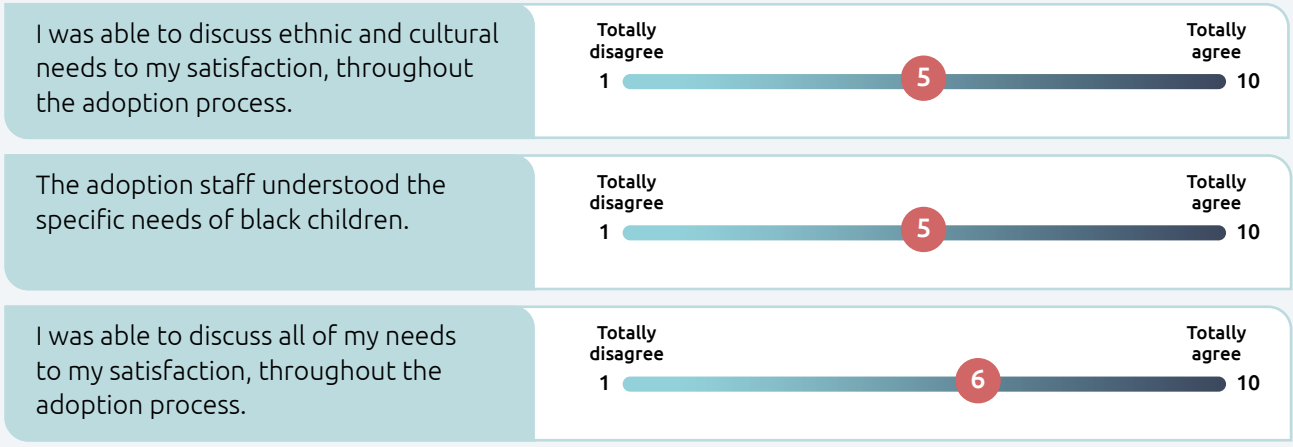



**Chart 4 – Your views on the promotion and awareness of adoption** 131 respondents

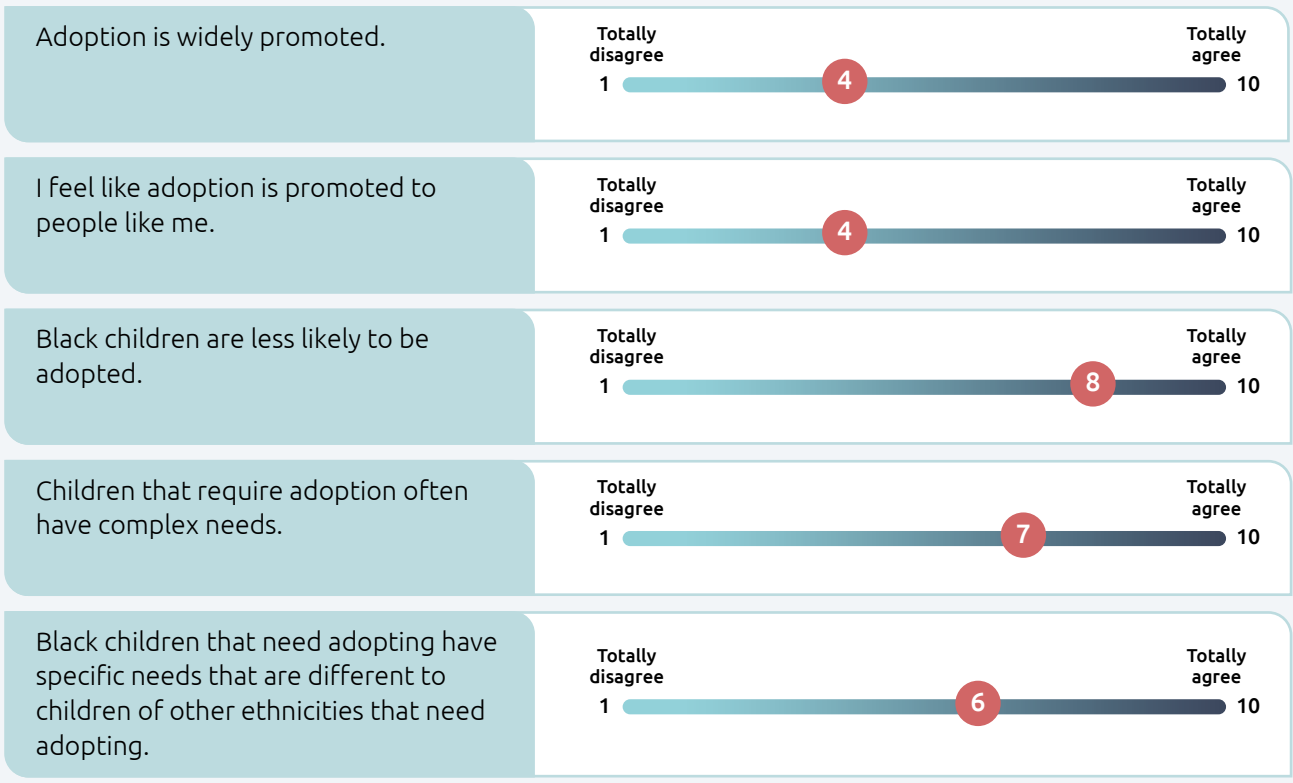


**Chart 5 – The promotion of adoption**

186 respondents **Where have you heard about Adopt London?**

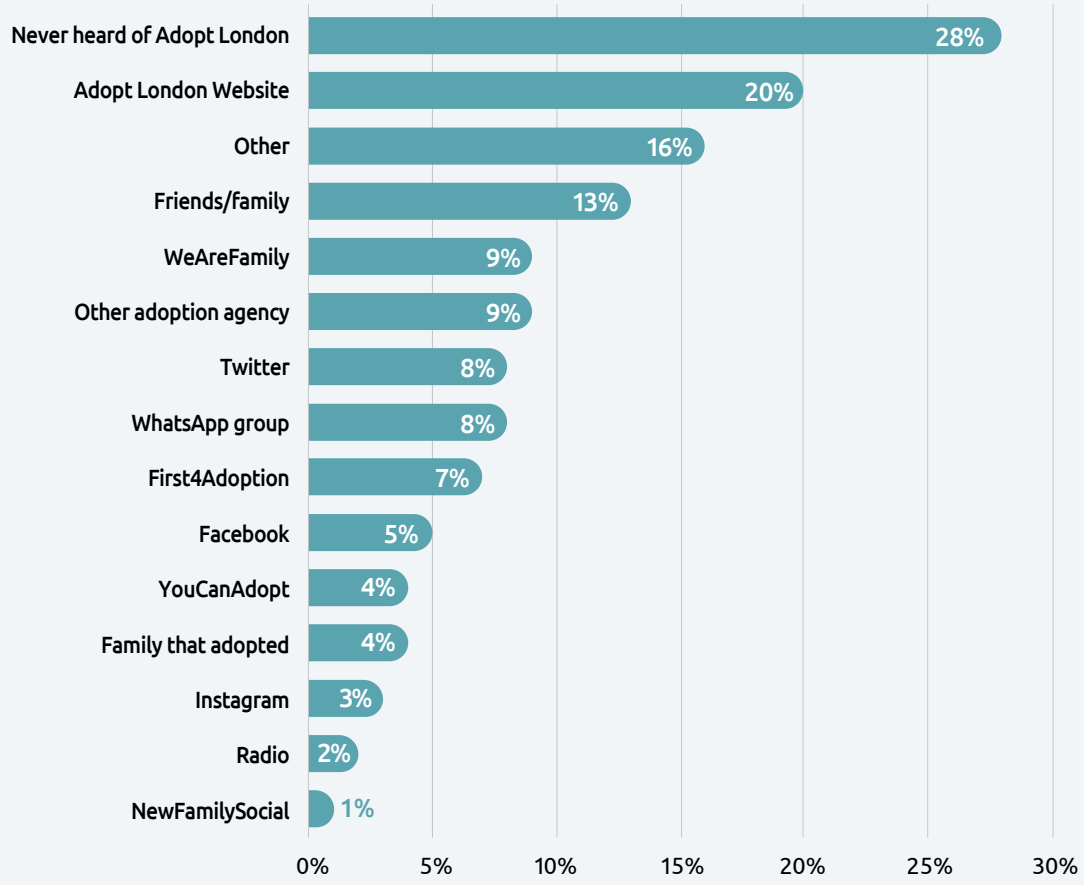
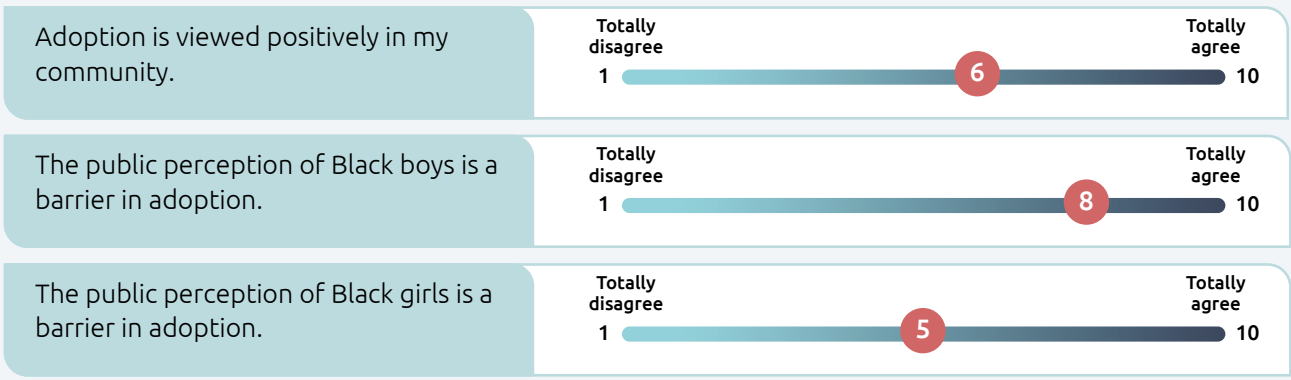



**Chart 6 – Your perceptions of adoption** 186 respondents



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BLACK ADOPTION PROJECT

ADOPT LONDON

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TRAINING & CONSULTANCY