

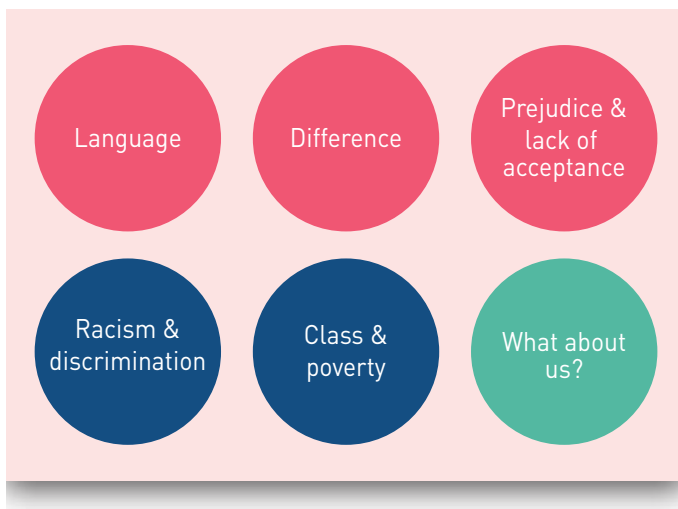
DIMENSIONS OF INTEGRATION IN POLICY DISCOURSES

and cultural integration, emphasised an important tension between conformity to local culture and customs and the maintenance of one's own culture that respondents discussed as problematic and challenging.

What does not help integration

The realisation of integration as defined above, however, is made difficult by barriers and challenges that were identified (inductively) and discussed by participants. These (or at least the main ones) are highlighted in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Main barriers to integration



Some barriers were mentioned by all groups of respondents (pink circles). These included lack of language knowledge (which hinders one's ability to interact and settle); issues of intolerance and prejudice (from the receiving society) often fuelled by the negative national political and media discourse about immigration; as well as divisions between communities due to cultural differences, with religion in particular being highlighted as a possible limit to social mixing. Some barriers were mostly emphasised by more 'established' ethnic minorities (blue squares), including issues of racism and discrimination as well as exclusion and inequalities based on social class and poverty (beyond ethnicity and migration). For these groups, it is also important to note the discontent expressed with the fact that 2nd+ generation migrants still feel the 'pressure' of having to integrate despite being born in the country. Finally, one main barrier that was mentioned mainly by those without an experience of migration (green), relate to the perception of being 'left behind' and not feeling free to express their own cultural identity (British/Scottish) or

their concerns and fears over lack of economic resources and immigration.

What could help?

When discussing facilitators of integration, the focus seemed to be very much on the social elements highlighted above, i.e. mixing, diversity, and tolerance. Therefore, participants suggested that creating common, neutral spaces where people from different (ethnic, national, cultural, religious) backgrounds can come together, interact and socialise (e.g. schools, sport events, shared celebrations and public events) could help social mixing but also strengthen awareness and acceptance of diversity. Participants with a direct experience of migration also highlighted the importance of supporting the process of integration through advice and help, e.g. with learning the language and generally knowing more about how the 'system works'.

Integration between ideals and reality

Integration seems to be perceived by the public as a societal goal that should be based on mutual acceptance of cultural diversity, tolerance and harmonious social mixing where all individuals are able to express themselves and thrive. However, this ideal appears to be a difficult goal to achieve in practice with boundaries between diversity and conformity, acceptance and rejection hard to establish and manage. Issues of socio-economic exclusion and inequalities, racism and discrimination, cultural barriers, negative political stances on immigration and, more simply, the struggles of 'everyday life' challenge the ideal goal of integration. This tension between 'ideal' and 'reality' where social mixing is desirable but not sufficient should not be ignored when discussing integration.

The data

The data in this brief comes from 9 focus groups conducted with members of the public in Manchester (Nov 2014 - Sept 2015) and 6 focus groups conducted in Glasgow (June 2015-September 2015). Approximately 108 participants aged 16+ with direct, indirect, and no experience of migration participated in the focus groups, which therefore involved a broad group of first generation migrants, settled ethnic minorities and the White British/Scottish ethnic majority. The size of the groups ranged between 3 and 12 participants. The recruitment of research participants was facilitated by local community groups and activists.¹

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