

## Forthcoming research – emerging findings

### Political participation by ethnic groups in Scotland

The CRE commissioned the Centre for Public Policy at Northumbria University (CPP) to conduct research into the motivations and barriers to political participation for different ethnic groups in Scotland. The research consisted of 308 street surveys in Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Inverness carried out between 16 November 2006 and 26 January 2007 with Chinese, Eastern European, Indian, Pakistani, White and Other<sup>1</sup> ethnic groups. In addition, four ethnically homogeneous focus groups of 8-11 people were conducted in each of the locations in November and December 2006 with Chinese, Indian, Pakistani and White participants.

Below are some emerging findings from the research. The full report will be published in May 2007 and will be available free from the CRE website, [www.cre.gov.uk](http://www.cre.gov.uk).

**Key policy issues across ethnic groups are similar and tend to be those controlled by the Scottish parliament.** When asked to consider the most important issues facing Scotland today, improving standards of education<sup>2</sup> and cutting crime<sup>3</sup> were consistently seen as key issues across all ethnic groups. These priorities were generally reflected in the focus group discussions. Pakistani participants were particularly concerned about the positive impact that better education and increased employment opportunities could have on reducing political apathy among young people. Most ethnic groups also highlighted the importance of helping the economy to grow faster and improving people's health.

**Voting in elections is the most popular form of political participation**, compared to 14 other ways of participating. 74% of respondents intend to vote, compared to 63% who have ever donated money to a charity or campaign group and 57% that have signed a petition. This pattern runs throughout every ethnic group with no group standing out as preferring one method of participation over another.

**People get involved in politics because they want to have their say and want the views of their communities to be counted.** This is consistent across all ethnic groups<sup>4</sup>.

**Focus group participants felt that current levels of representation from ethnic minorities were "tokenistic"**. Some ethnic minority participants were unconvinced about whether the political parties are genuinely committed to "fighting their corner" and there was some concern that creating distinctions based on race or ethnicity was not the best way forward. One of the Chinese participants in our focus group commented that "putting people into boxes and saying we need a black one, a Chinese one a Muslim one – that's what creates anger and divisions amongst people."

**Lack of time to get more involved in politics, politicians failing to successfully communicate with communities, and the fear of racism** were the main barriers to participation highlighted in the focus groups.

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<sup>1</sup> The Other group included Other Asian, Black Caribbean, Black African, Other Black, Gypsy/Traveller and Other ethnic

<sup>2</sup> Education: 36% Pakistani, 27% Indian, 24% White, 19% eastern European, 14% Chinese and 10% Other

<sup>3</sup> Cut crime: 33% Indian 21% Pakistani, , 16% White, 13% eastern European, 8% Chinese and 20% Other

<sup>4</sup> Respondents agreed that they get involved in politics because they want to have their say on a particular issue: 73% Indian, 73% White, 68% Chinese, 68% Pakistani, 65% Other and 64% eastern European

Respondents agreed that they want the views of their community to be counted: 80% Pakistani, 77% Other, 71% White, 65% Indian, 65% Chinese, and 50% eastern European