

END EVERYDAY RACISM

Your story matters. Record racism for a better Cambridge.

AUGUST 2020 REPORT



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE
Department of Sociology

THIS REPORT

This booklet provides an overview of the End Everyday Racism project and shares the findings from the first 20 months of the project, from October 2018 until mid-June 2020. It is based on 117 submitted reports.

To find out more, visit our website at www.racismatcambridge.org

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THE TEAM

The End Everyday Racism Project is an independent research project developed by Dr Mónica Moreno Figueroa and Dr Ella McPherson based in the Department of Sociology at University of Cambridge.

This project has gone through a consultation process with various organisations and individuals within and outside the University of Cambridge who have reviewed the report and given us feedback. Supporters of the EER include UCU Cambridge Branch, Cambridge University Student Union and Graduate Union, FLY, The Black Cantabs Research Society, The 1752 Group and the Decolonising Sociology Committee.



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The Project

- Launched in October 2018, the End Everyday Racism (EER) project aims to generate two kinds of information. On the one hand, we are building knowledge about how everyday racism works in a higher education institution such as the University of Cambridge. On the other hand, this project is about informing the work of student and staff antiracist activism in the University that is pushing the agenda for institutional change.
- The primary goal of EER is for individuals to be able to thoroughly document the complexity of experiencing and witnessing racism. While individual accounts can be downloaded and used as necessary by their own writers, this collective storytelling and the periodic reports that the EER team deliver are an excellent resource for the advocacy against racism in Cambridge.
- The EER platform does not collect the identity of the individuals who submitted accounts nor of those involved in the documented racism, and this project is not aimed at resolving individual cases nor is it an official reporting procedure.
- Rather, EER enables a distinct process that allows those who have experienced or witnessed racism to explain and detail their experiences with the political aim of mapping racism in and around the University and Colleges, as well as contributing to the sociological attempt to quantify and qualify an everyday phenomenon. Of course, members of the community can also lodge official complaints and report incidents of racism through other means, and they can choose to download their EER report to support their case if necessary.
- The reports gathered through EER will help us understand how racism is experienced at Cambridge with numeric, descriptive and geographic evidence. As such, it can be used to inform advocacy and institutional change, and for academic presentations and publications. The project aims to raise a collective case against racism so that it is clear for students and staff the specific ways in which racism limits and challenges their life at the University.

Project Goals

The End Everyday Racism project in Cambridge has both academic and activist goals, as well as a strong commitment to recognising and validating those who have experienced racial abuse.

Unpacking the dynamics of a complex everyday phenomenon

- In the first instance, this project aims to generate knowledge about how everyday racism works in a higher education institution such as the University of Cambridge.
- The reports gathered through the EER platform will help us understand how racism is experienced at Cambridge with numeric, descriptive and geographic evidence.

Supporting and informing antiracist activism

- This project is also about informing the work of antiracist activism and pushing the agenda for institutional change at the University.
- The project aims to raise a collective case against racism, illustrating in clear and quantifiable ways the specific impact of racism upon students and staff. Through a focus on the emotional effect of racist incidents, we hope to describe the ways in which racism limits and challenges the lives of those affected at the University.
- Taken together, the collective storytelling and the periodic reports that the EER team deliver will become an excellent resource for advocacy against racism.

Creating solidarity through recognising and validating those who have experienced racial abuse

- The collective process of documenting everyday racist incidents validates the experience for many and encourages them to acknowledge such experiences for what they are: unacceptable.
- Furthermore, compiling a collective storytelling narrative provides a sense of solidarity amongst people who can often feel isolated and alienated by the Cambridge institution.

How does it work?

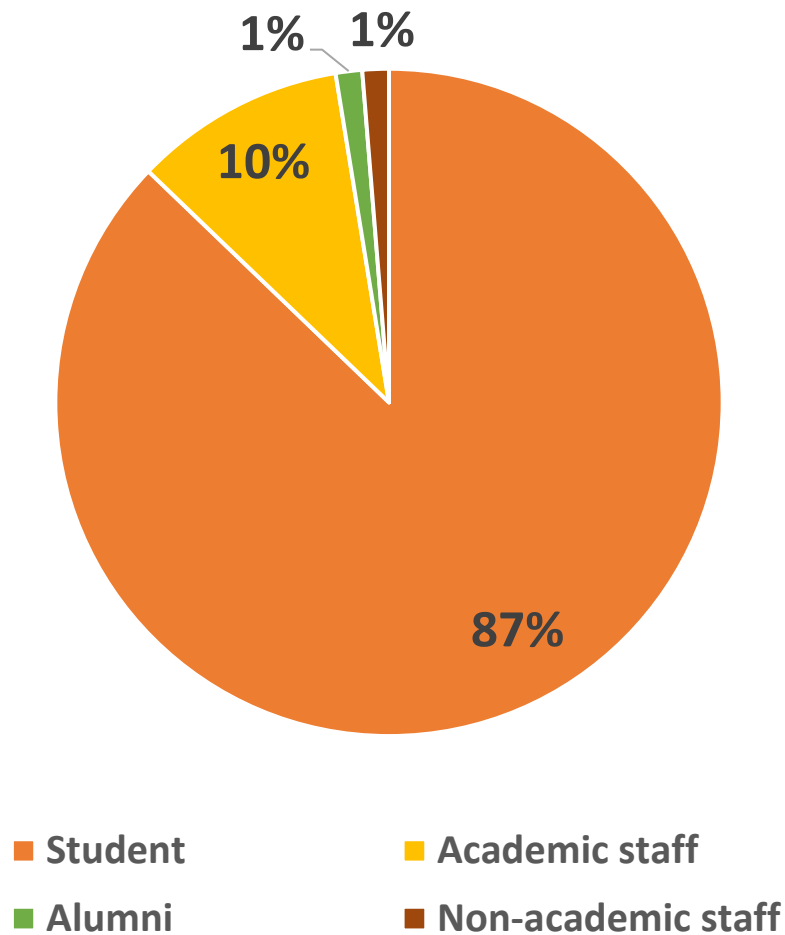
The End Everyday Racism project uses an anonymous web-based reporting platform to collect individual accounts of racist incidents in and around the University.

- EER is based on reporting technology designed to support advocacy and solidarity-building, developed by *The Whistle*, an academic start-up led by Dr McPherson. This enables members of the University of Cambridge to document incidents of racism that they have either experienced or witnessed by filling in an anonymous form. Participants are prompted to report on where the incidents of racism occurred, how they developed as well as their emotional and physical consequences – a distinctive element of this project and an innovation stemming from Dr Moreno Figueroa's research.
- All members of the University can make anonymous reports, including students, academic staff, administrative staff and alumni. Reporters verify their University membership through the use of an @cam or @cantab email address, data that is checked but not stored.
- The primary goal of EER is for individuals to be able to thoroughly document the complexity of experiencing and witnessing racism. At the end of the process, participants can choose to download their own entries should they wish, which may assist with raising the incident through official reporting procedures.

EVERYDAY RACISM IN NUMBERS

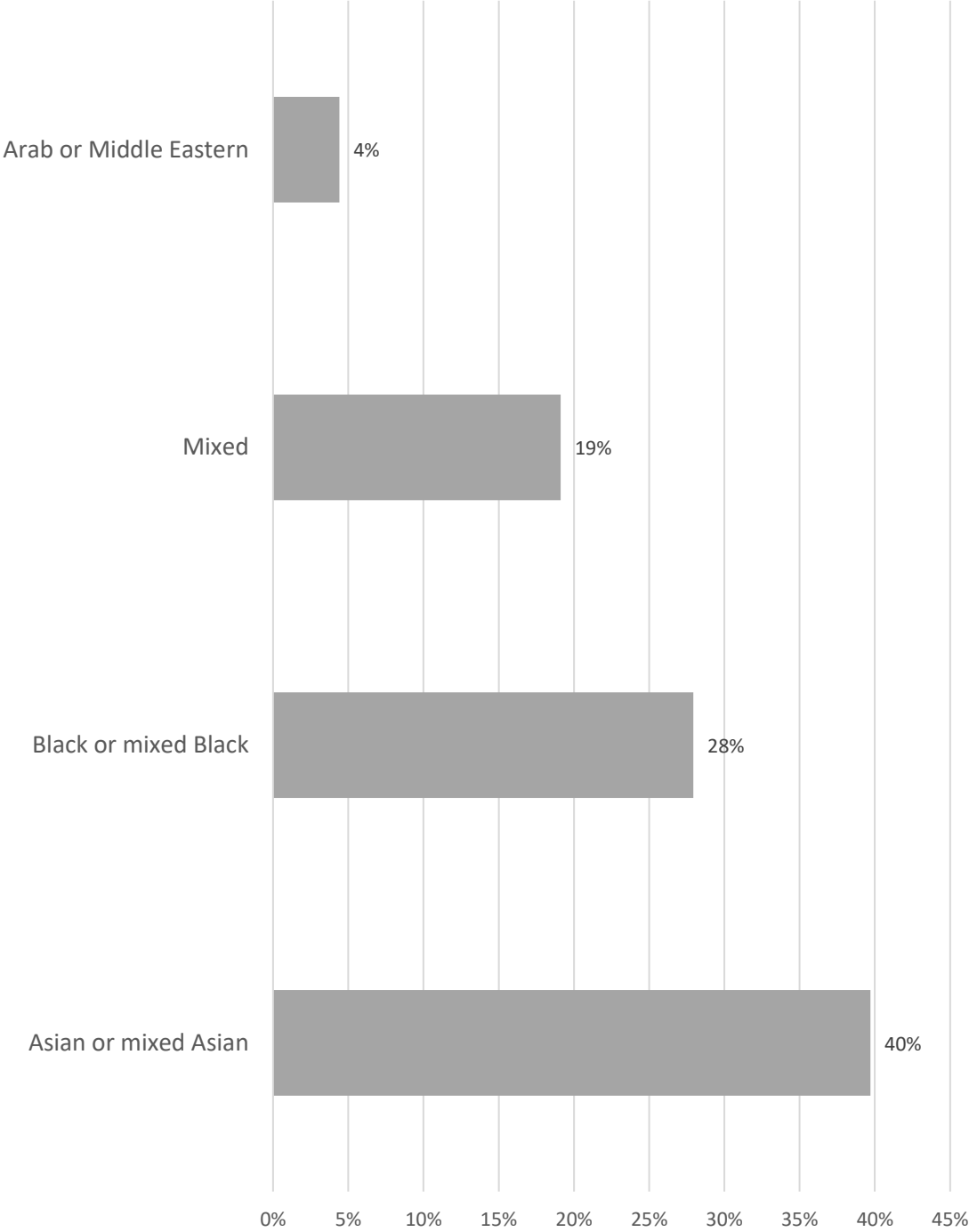


**Reports were
overwhelmingly from
students (n=78)**



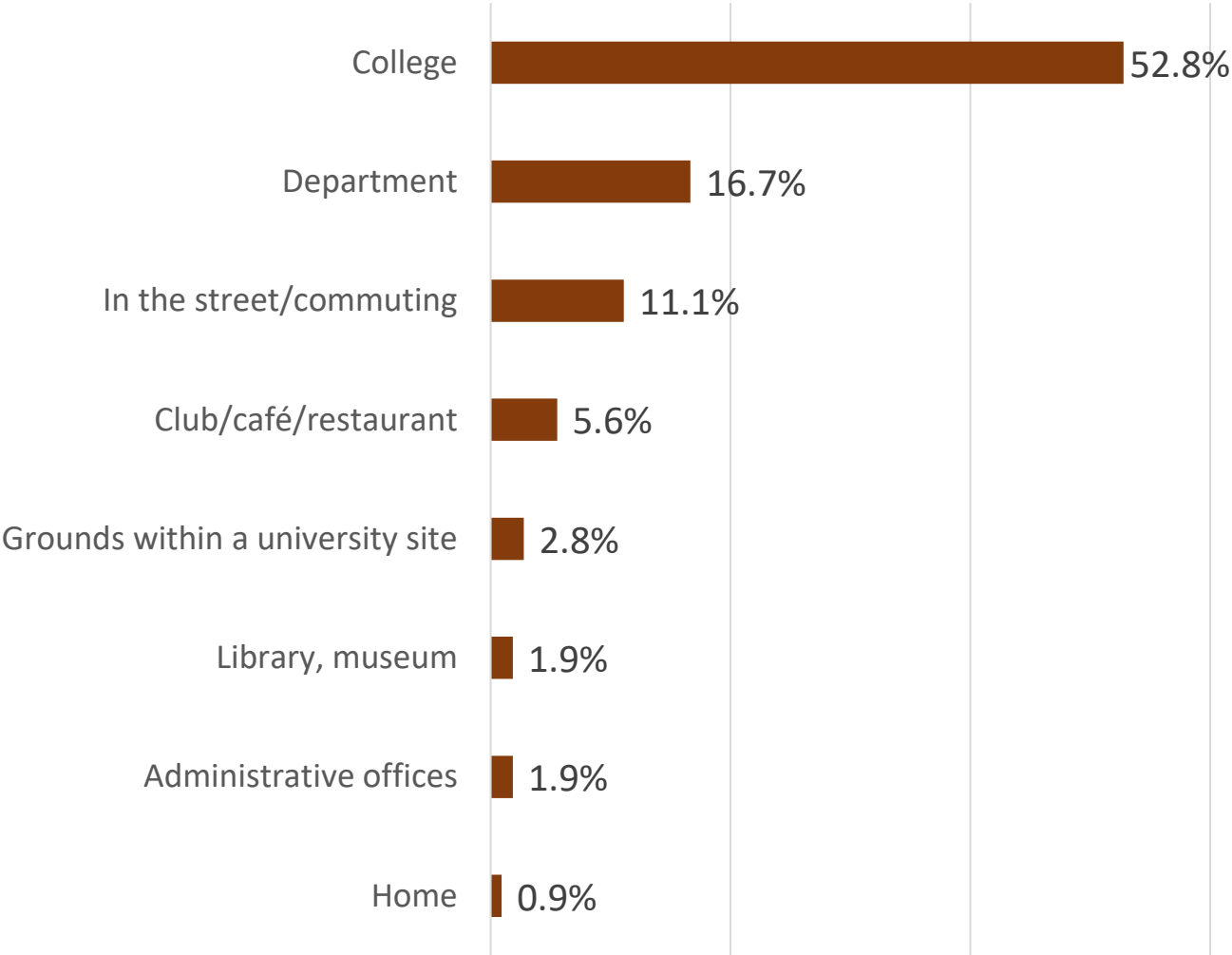
Of the reports submitted by members of the University, students are the most vulnerable population to racialisation in Cambridge – undergraduate and graduate students, equally.

**40% of those who experienced racism
identify as Asian, and 28% as Black
(n=68)**



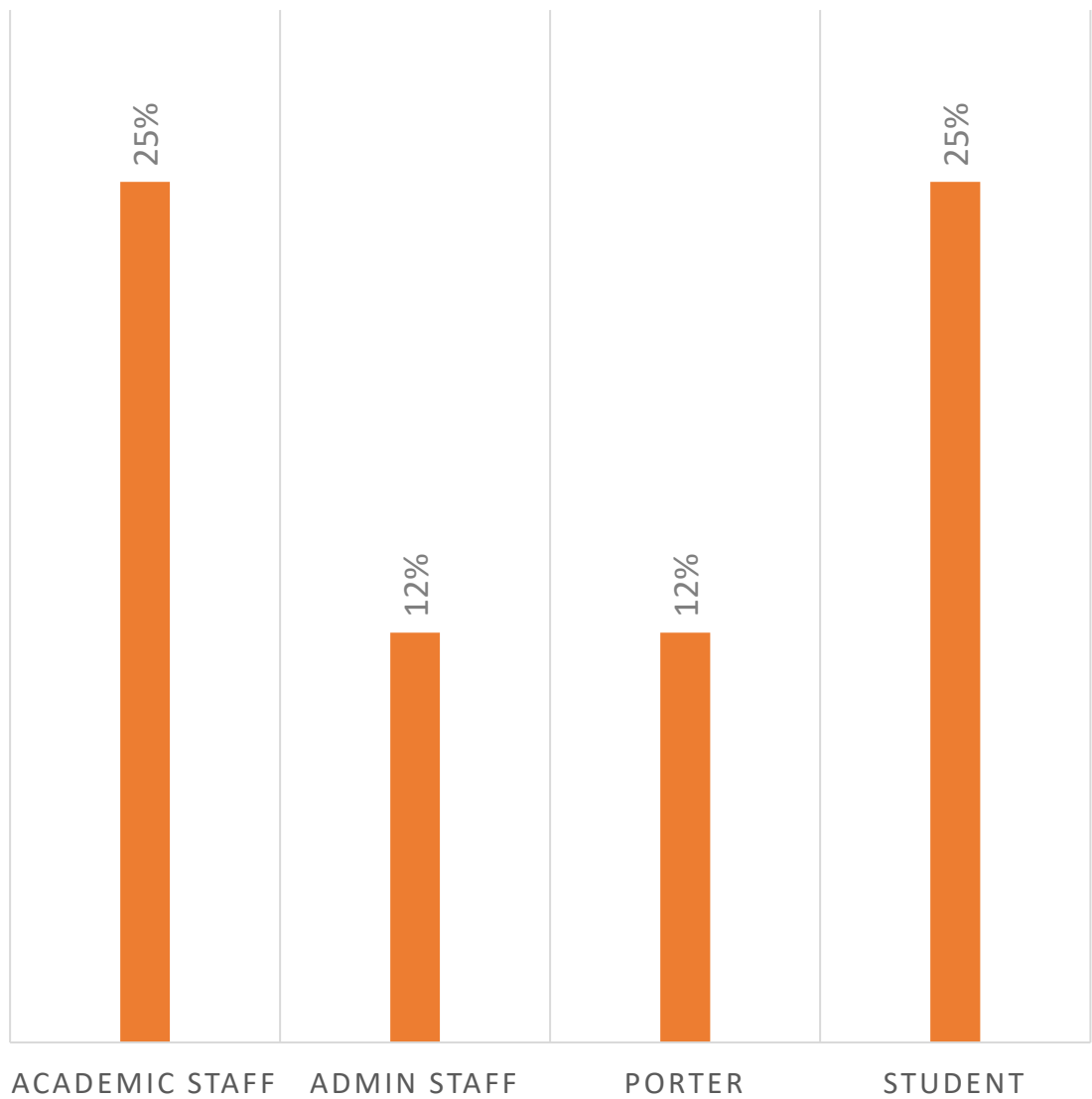
Overall, those who identify as Asian have been the predominant group in being racialised, at 40 percent, followed by Black people at 28 percent. The current pandemic is having a significant impact on the racialisation of Asian people. This is reflected in the fact that half of incidents submitted by those who identify as Asian have been reported since February 2020.

More than half of all racist incidents have been in Colleges (n=108)



53 percent of racist incidents have taken place in Colleges – including, but not limited to, student accommodation, offices, porters’ lodges, gardens and supervision rooms. Various university buildings and grounds were the setting for 23 percent of racist incidents.

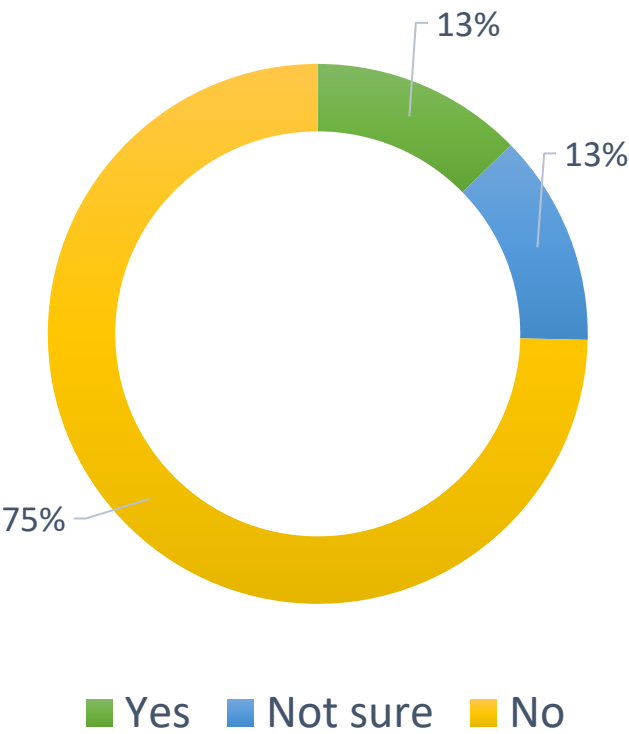
**Perpetrators of Racism Range Across
Roles at the University (N=84)**



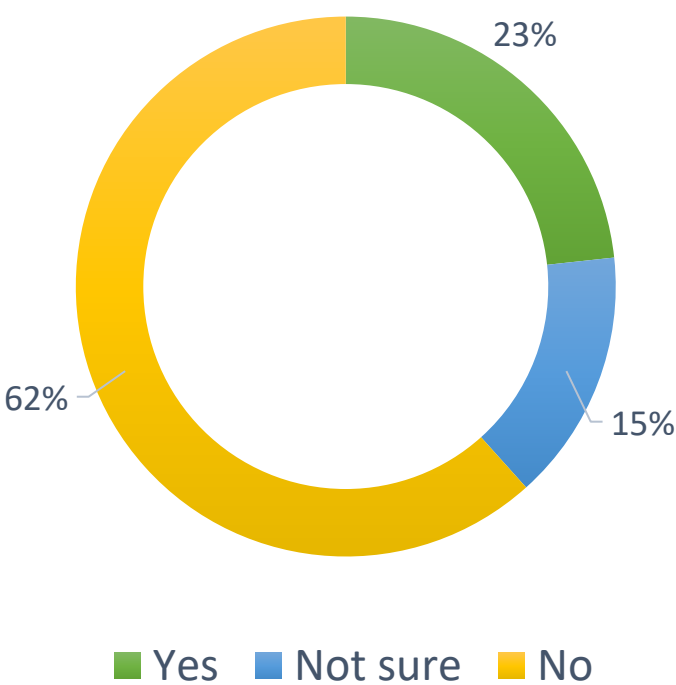
In the incidents that have been reported, responses have shown that academic staff and students have equally been perpetrators, at 25% each. This is followed by administrative staff and porters’ involvement. However, the narrative data clearly shows that porters’ impact on racialisation at the University of Cambridge is significant.

Racist incidents impact respondents' work and studies

**Job/study feels at risk
(n=71)**

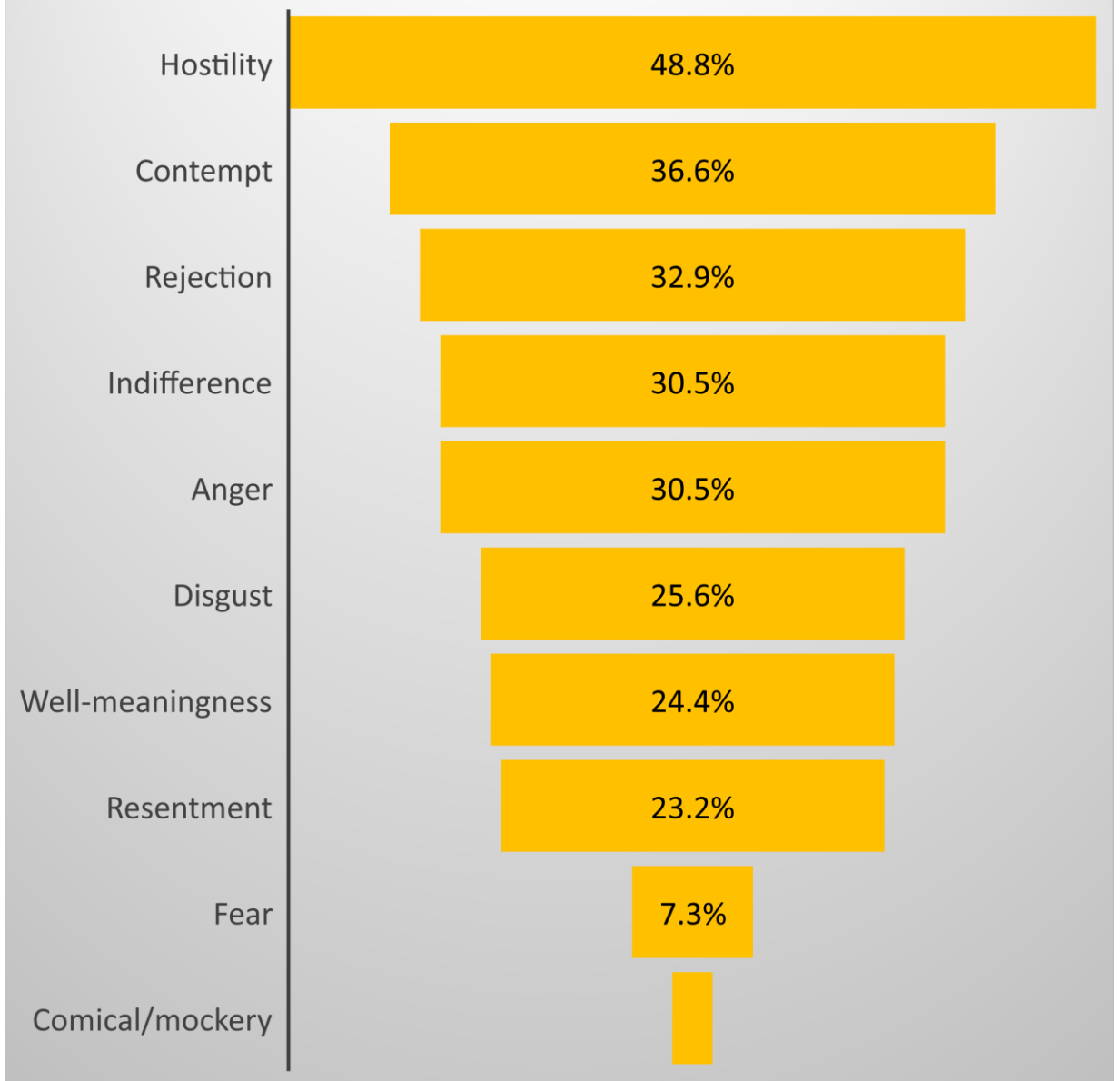


**Job/study made more difficult
(n=73)**



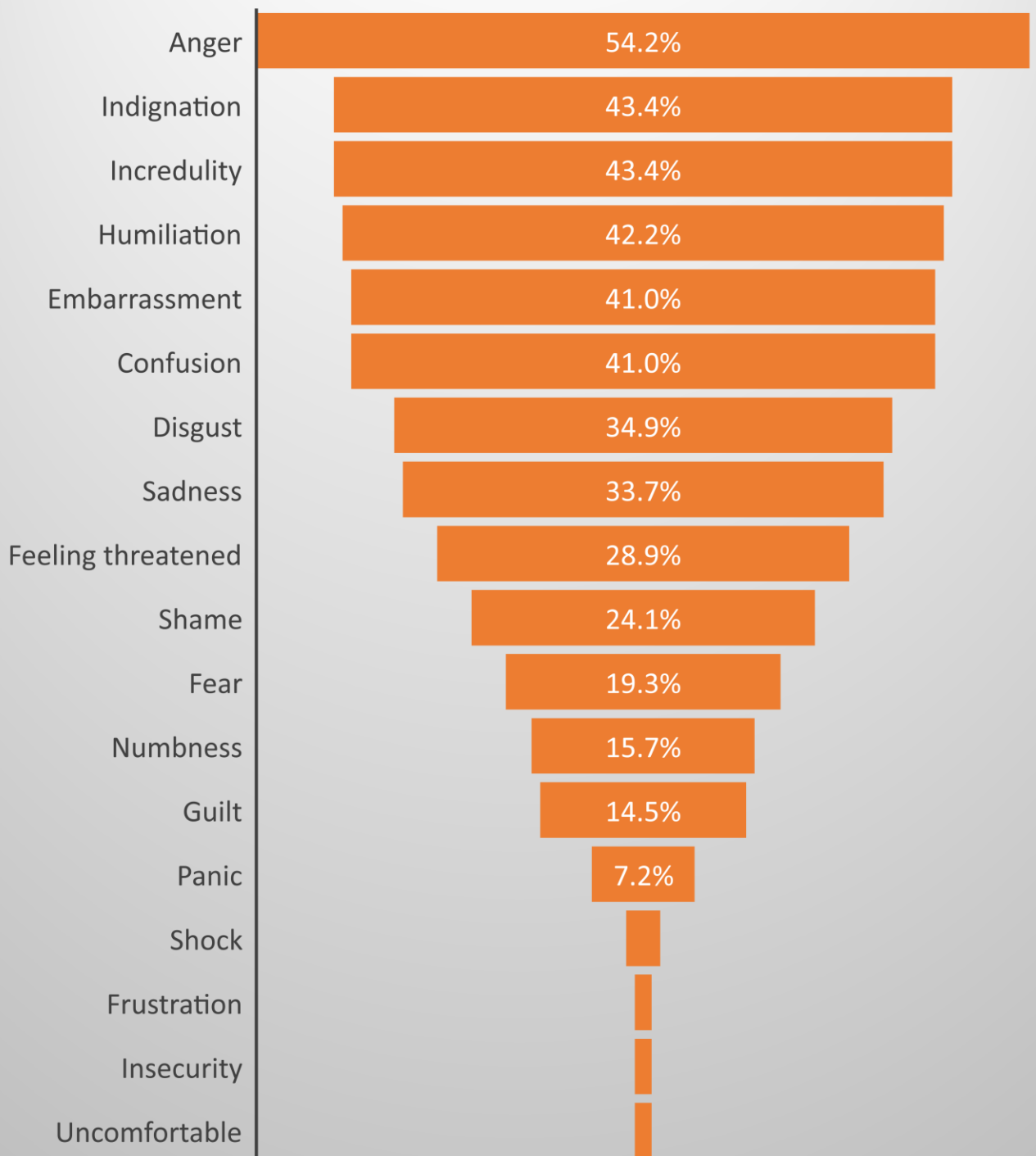
More than 1 in 4 people who have reported a racist incident feel that their job or study is, or is potentially, at risk as a result of the incident. One-third of reporters have stated that the incident might have made or did make it difficult for them to perform well in their work or studies.

Reporters experienced a range of emotions directed at them (n=82)



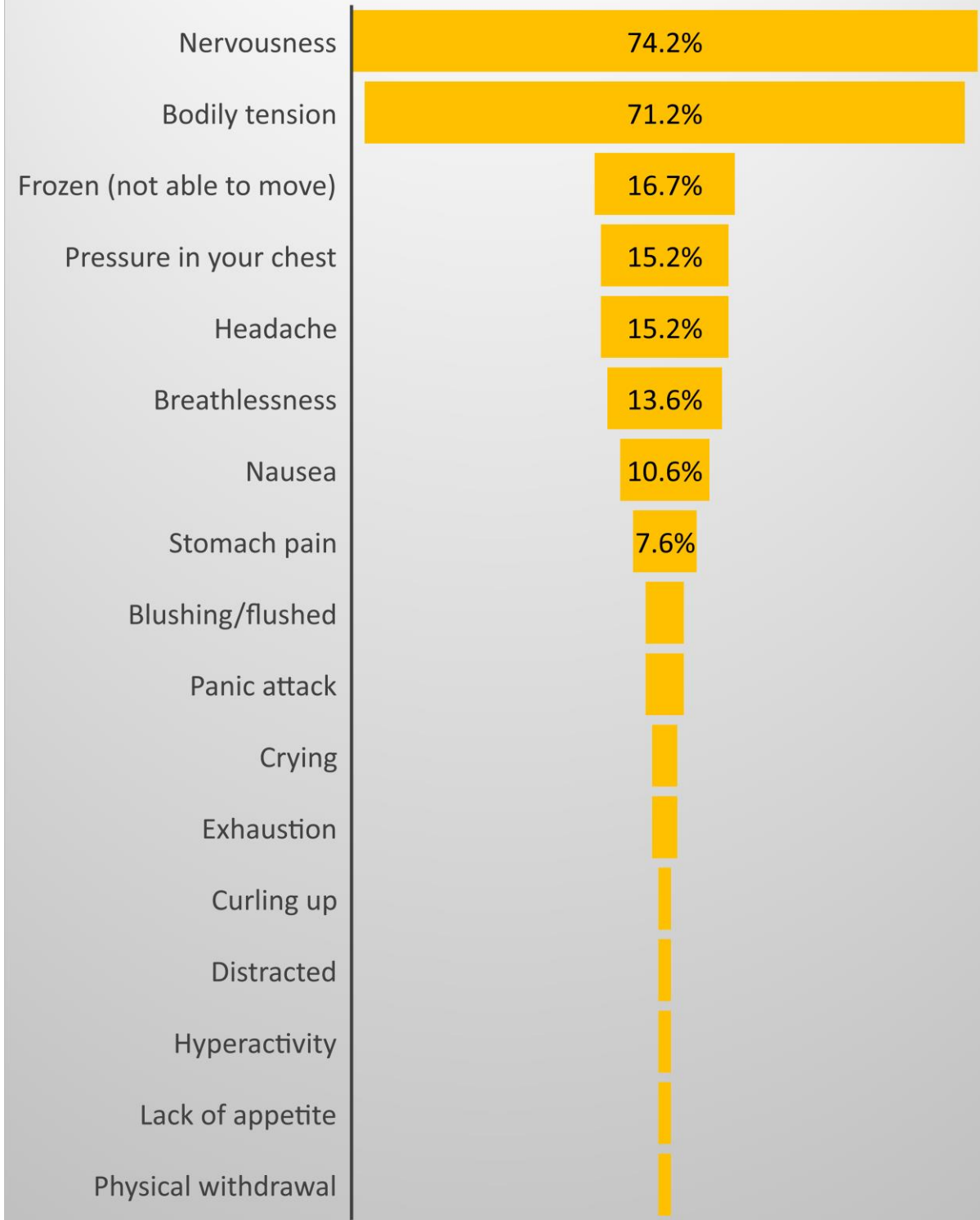
In detailing their experience of everyday racism, almost half the respondents reported feeling that hostility was directed towards them, while a third of reporters felt themselves to be the object of contempt and/or rejection.

Reporters felt a range of emotions during the reported racist incidents (n=83)



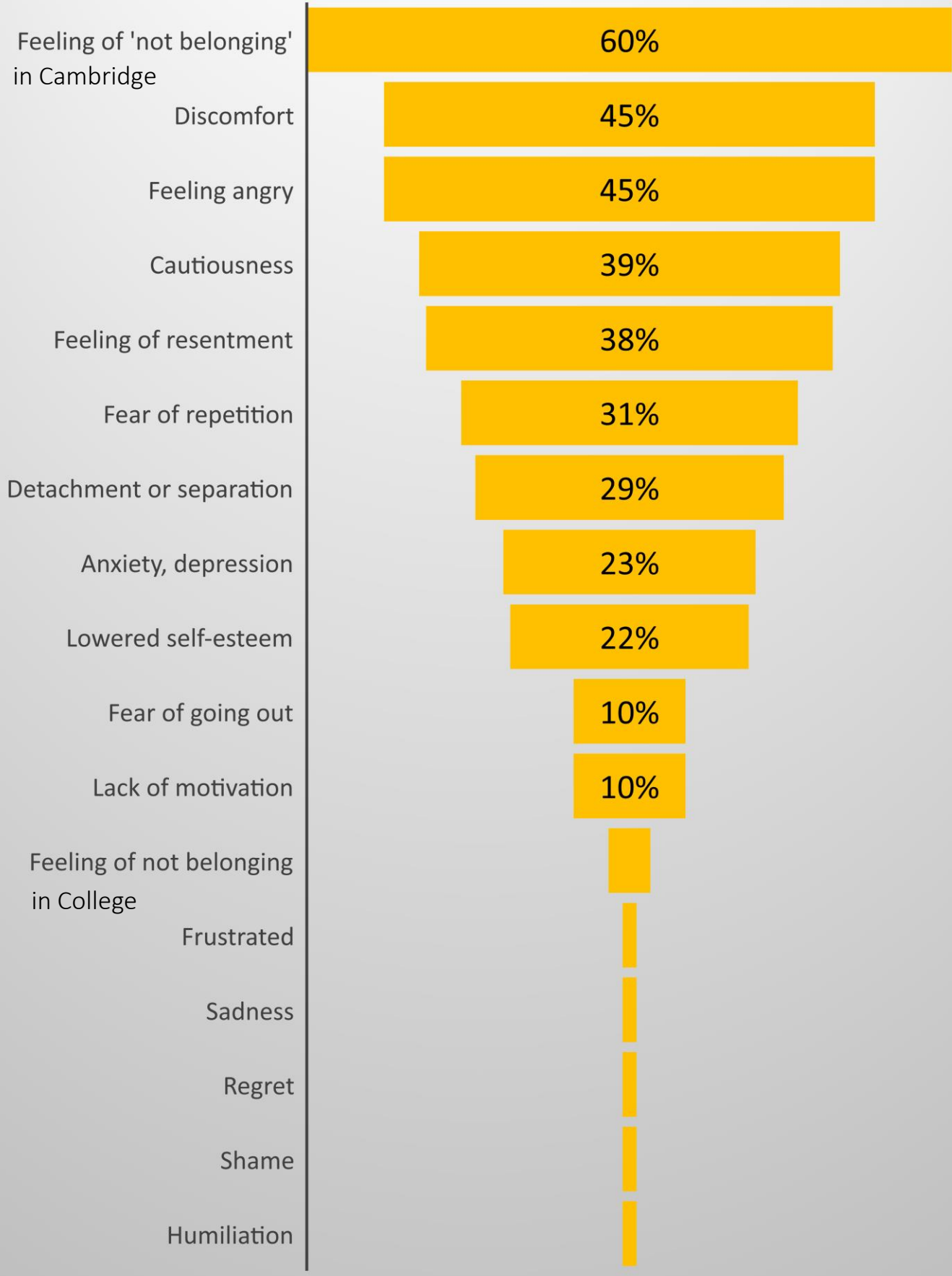
Eighty-three respondents documented feeling a total of 373 emotions during the racist incidents they reported. More than half of them reported feeling angry. Indignation, incredulity, humiliation, embarrassment and confusion were experienced by more than 40 percent of the respondents.

Most respondents had a physical reaction to the racist incidents (n=66)



Feelings of nervousness and bodily tension have been experienced by more than 70 percent of respondents as a result of the racist incident.

Respondents experienced a significant range of consequences following the racist incidents (n=77)



Sixty percent of respondents reported a feeling of not belonging in Cambridge as a consequence of the racist incident they experienced. Almost half of reporters felt discomfort and/or anger following the incident.

KEY CONCLUSIONS



Respondents expressed a need for validation of their feelings and experiences

One of the most recurrent emotions expressed by respondents was the need for validation of their feelings about and experience of the incident. In 25 incidents, respondents noted that they thought they were over-reacting to the situation, and that their feelings were not valid, until they spoke to someone who helped them see that the incident and their feelings should not be dismissed.

One respondent stated that, as a result of speaking to someone else about the incident, they were reminded 'that I wasn't overreacting and [the perpetrator's response] wasn't an appropriate response'. Similarly, other respondents reported that they feared seeming 'over-sensitive' or 'aggressive' when they thought about the incident and its aftermath, with regards to expressing their emotions and officially reporting the incident.

Respondents experienced powerlessness

Powerlessness manifested itself in at least three forms for respondents:

- i. Feeling like one cannot officially report the incident;
 - ii. Feeling powerless when one does file a complaint;
 - iii. Experiencing a status hierarchy between the perpetrator and reporter that exacerbated the situation.
- One respondent stated, ‘Many people in the course acknowledged [that] this happen[ed] but we felt powerless to do anything’. Similarly, another respondent feared filing a complaint, because ‘reporting someone so high up in college can have bad consequences’.
 - This is perhaps one of the most important findings, in that people experiencing or witnessing racism feel powerless to officially report it, which further reproduces the space allowed for these incidents to happen again.

Respondents feel excluded from physical spaces

- Racist incidents very often change or shape how the respondents relate to a physical space. Participants reported 40 incidents where they were either refused entry to a physical space, were discriminated against as they were entering a space, or did not feel safe about returning to the space where the incident occurred.
- A repeated occurrence in the reports as experiences of spatial exclusion was racist incidents perpetrated by college porters. Some respondents referred to this as being 'portered'. Being 'portered' means members of the University experiencing discrimination as they are entering a college – either their own, or when visiting friends or for supervisions.

Revealing ingrained racism

Respondents have stated their frustration, overwhelm and upset as a result of witnessing and/or experiencing multiple incidents and the existence of ingrained racism in Cambridge and at the University more specifically. Here are some excerpts from reports on this theme:

- ‘It’s not just this incident – it’s this incident in conjunction with everything else that makes me feel out of place’.
- ‘As of today, racial abuse has become part of my everyday experience at the University. I now know that I can expect this treatment from the staff even escalating to police threats’.
- ‘It’s just annoying. Added to the list of microaggressions’.
- ‘It’s been one of many racist incidents that have happened which have made me feel unwelcome in Cambridge’.

Respondent feedback supports the project and the platform

Feedback shows that this reporting tool has benefited the respondents profoundly, as they have felt like their experiences are seen and validated. EER has made it possible for those who have experienced and witnessed racism to feel solidarity by going through this process.

‘I am happy that for once someone is addressing this issue in Cambridge as I felt it was swept under the carpet for too long.’

‘It’s been great writing this down, definitely feels therapeutic in a way. I would say that using our experiences as testimonials to convince the university to establish strict practices would be very useful.’

‘This is great and I feel like a weight has been lifted, thank you so much!’

‘I would just like to say this is a great initiative, and Cambridge really has no excuse for not having done this before.’

ACTION POINTS



Based on these findings, the End Everyday Racism project recommends the following action points:

Staff and students should be made feel safe and empowered to report racist incidents

- Many respondents have reported feelings of powerlessness when it comes to reporting racism in Cambridge. Members of the University are aware of formal reporting mechanisms, yet are not confident that there will be any change resulting from reporting.
- The University and Colleges should make their anti-racist position clearer and reporting easier. They should take immediate action when a complaint is filed, in line with Race Equality Charter Action Points 1 and 69, which can be found here: [Race Equality Charter | Race Equality at Cambridge](#). This will also help interrupt blame-shifting, whereby the responsibility and reaction to a racist incident are passed from area to area, office to office or person to person. All members of the University and Colleges should assume responsibility for what happens within the University and the Colleges.

University-wide anti-racism training for students and staff is necessary

- Students should be given mandatory anti-racism training as part of their induction into the University, the Departments, and/or the Colleges. This training would benefit from a wider anti-oppression stance as well as from an intersectional approach. Cambridge's existing training with regards to the issue of consent and sexual harassment could be a model for this.

Colleges should assume further responsibility for taking action against racism, and porters should receive further training on non-discriminatory practices

- Colleges should take further responsibility to develop means of identifying, addressing, and stopping racism and racist incidents within their institutions.
- There is an urgent need in collegiate Cambridge for porters to receive extensive training on non-discriminatory practices, especially as relates to monitoring the entrance to College grounds.
- This need draws attention to the necessity for Colleges to train their staff members, in line with Race Equality Charter Action Point 5 (see [Race Equality Charter | Race Equality at Cambridge](#)). The University can create an inter-collegiate system or charter to support Colleges and hold them to account for such training.

Colleges, Departments and other University institutions should develop and support their own anti-racist groups

- Respondents have noted that what helped them most was speaking to people who have experienced similar racist incidents. This finding is especially important in guiding those who have suffered racism towards caring and supportive resources. The percentage of respondents who have spoken to a member of an anti-racist group is considerably low (6%).
- To provide safe spaces for racist incidents to be discussed and processed, University institutions should actively work towards their own zero-tolerance policies on racism and develop and support in-house anti-racist groups.
- This is particularly an issue for staff members. Only nine staff members have reported a racist incident on the EER platform out of 78 people who stated their status. Staff members may need further support. The BAME Staff Network is a first step in this process. However, both students and staff should have multiple mechanisms where they can feel safe to discuss racist incidents.

The University should make its anti-racist stance visible in the city of Cambridge

- Not all incidents happened between people affiliated with the University of Cambridge. Ranging from passer-by comments to physical violence, many racist incidents were reported that took place in Cambridge, yet outside of the University. To counteract this, the University should make its anti-racist stance visible in the town of Cambridge.

Departments and Colleges should help to increase awareness of the platform

- Colleges, Departments and other institutions of the University should support increasing awareness of the EER platform by providing links to the EER website on their own websites and by disseminating information about the platform. This will encourage more reports to be submitted, and hence increase our understanding and awareness of everyday racism in Cambridge.
- Respondents report solidarity benefits from the process of reporting on the EER platform.
- EER can be presented to the community alongside other reporting mechanisms at the University with a clear explanation of the relative strengths of each platform.

Racist incidents create an overwhelming range of physical and emotional reactions for those who experience them, making it difficult to process and move on. This should be taken into account in all actions taken.



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