

Exploring the Factors for the Decline in Black Students' Involvement in LSESU Sports Team

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Background

- Starting from the 2018/19 academic year to the current 2022/23, LSE's intake of students has increased by nearly 17%, with the proportion of Black students at LSE also increasing by just over 32%.
- Likewise, the same time span yielded an increase of 7.4% amongst the AU memberships at LSESU, which is the predominant method for measuring students' participation in sport at LSE.
- Black student's participation rate has also increased over this period by an estimated 28% theoretically suggests that the more than proportionate increase in Black student's participation level is not a cause for concern.
- However, this has proven to be the opposite. A simple eye-test at many LSE sports teams has shown an incredible lack of diversity with many teams or sports being dominated by one ethnic group. As a result, this Change Makers project aimed to answer the following questions;

Research Question

Why are certain ethnic groups, specifically Black students at LSE, unwilling to participate in Sports at LSE? More importantly, how can they be motivated for greater participation?

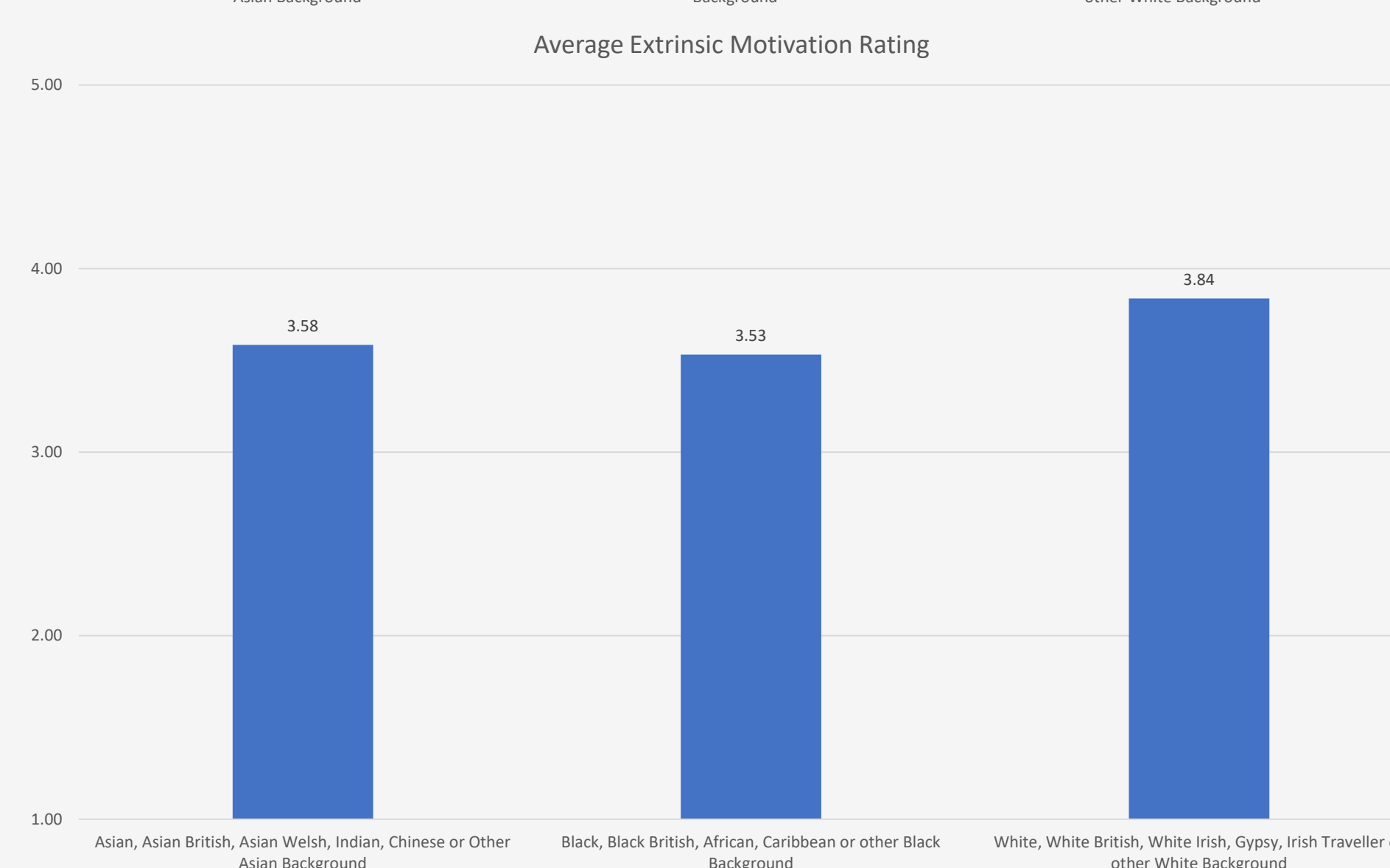
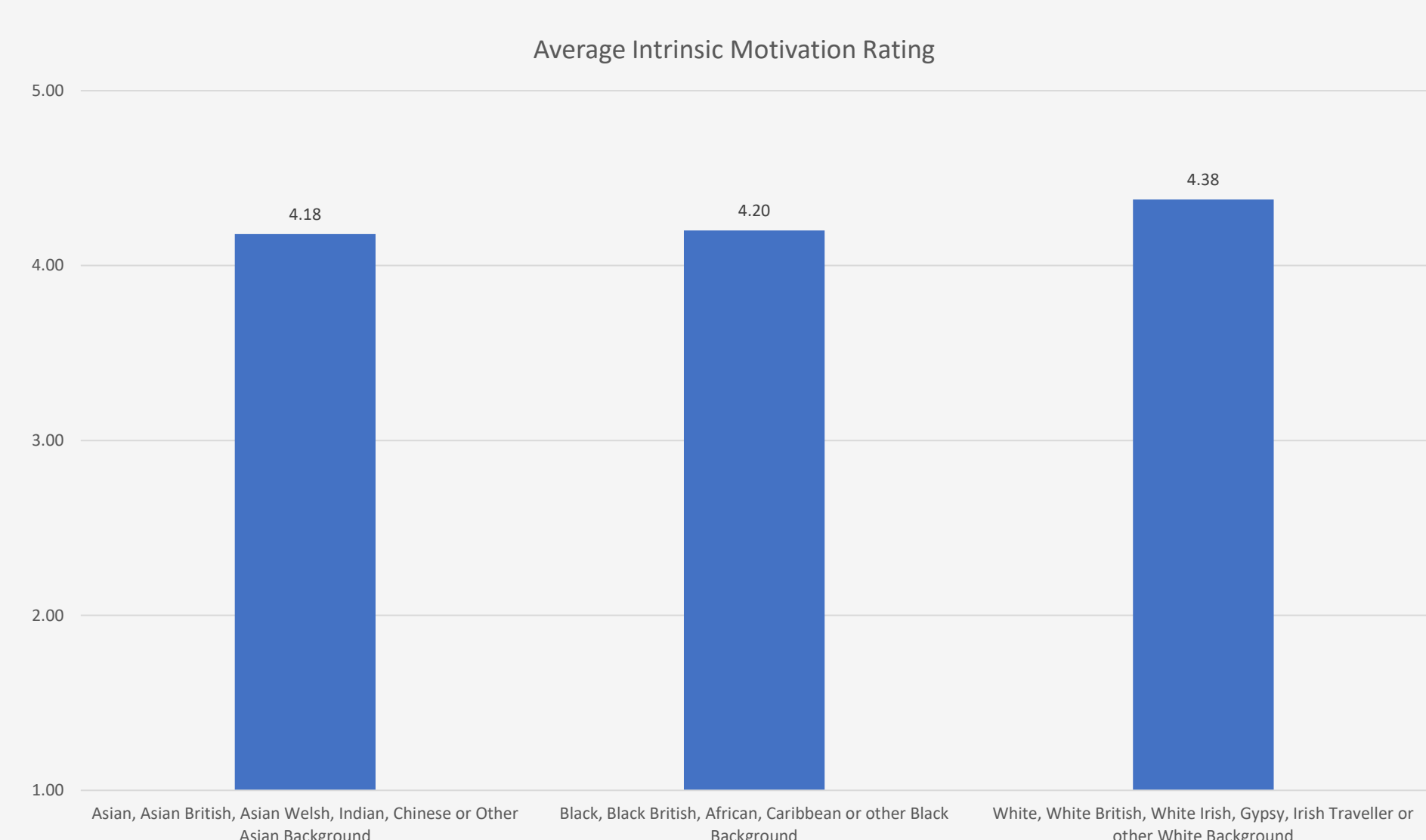
Methodology

- I opted for a mixed methods approach for my primary research.
- Quantitative** - Prior informal conversations formed the foundation for the main questioning themes in the survey which are Motivation, Strategic Choice and Social Identity.
- The questions were posed to students on a Likert scale from 1 -5 with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree.
- I received 112 responses to my survey, with the ethnic demographic being 52 Black students, 30 White students, 22 Asian students, who all formed the basis for statistical analysis.
- Qualitative** – The results from the survey formed the basis for the qualitative focus group discussions which I undertook with 10 Black students over 2hrs.
- Participants widely varied over year of study and had a good balance between current participants in a sport at LSE and participants who had never taken part in a sport at LSE.

Findings

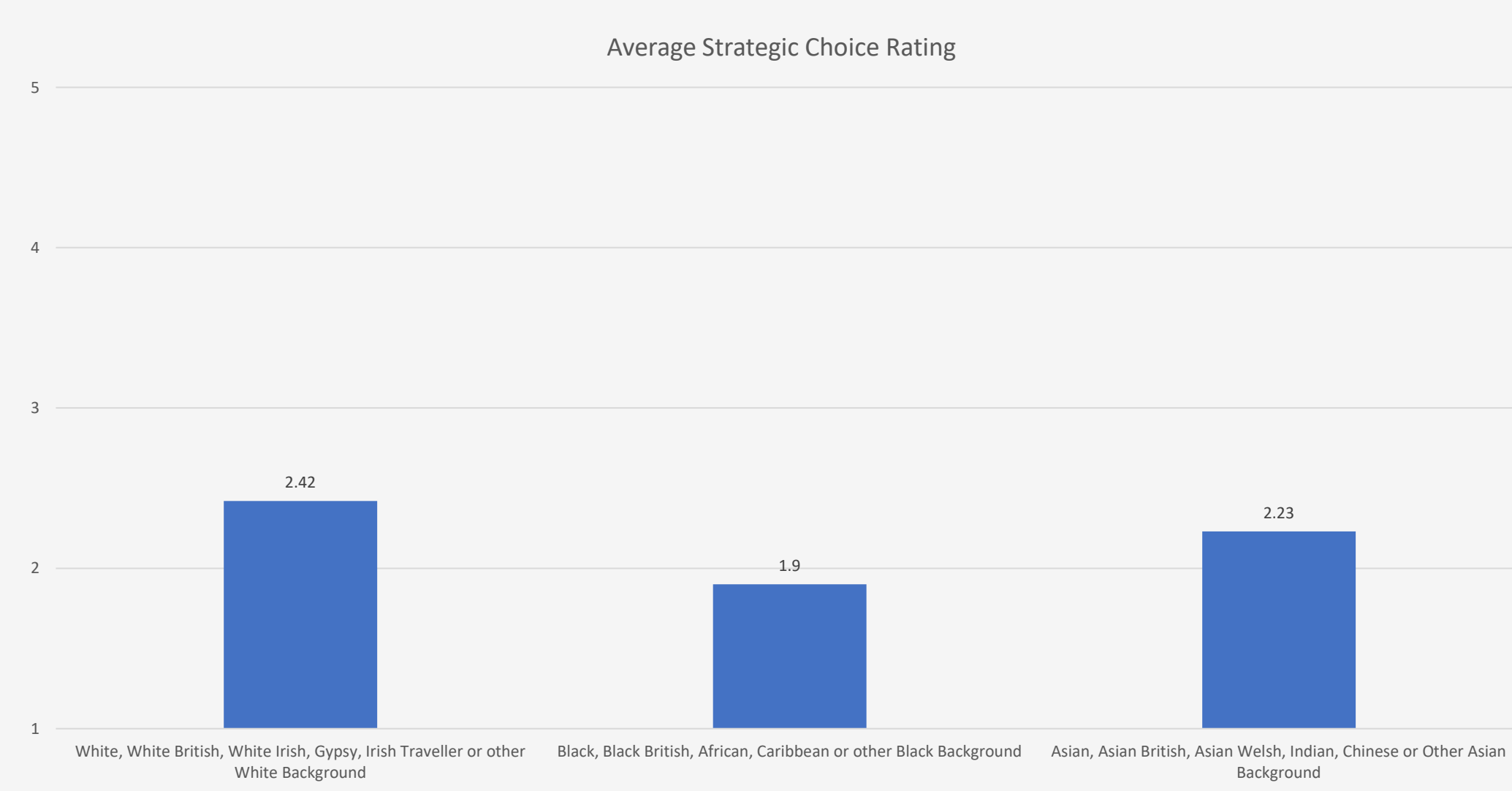
- The following findings are based on the three main ethnic groups that answered the survey as the other ethnic groups did not receive enough responses to be significant

Motivation?



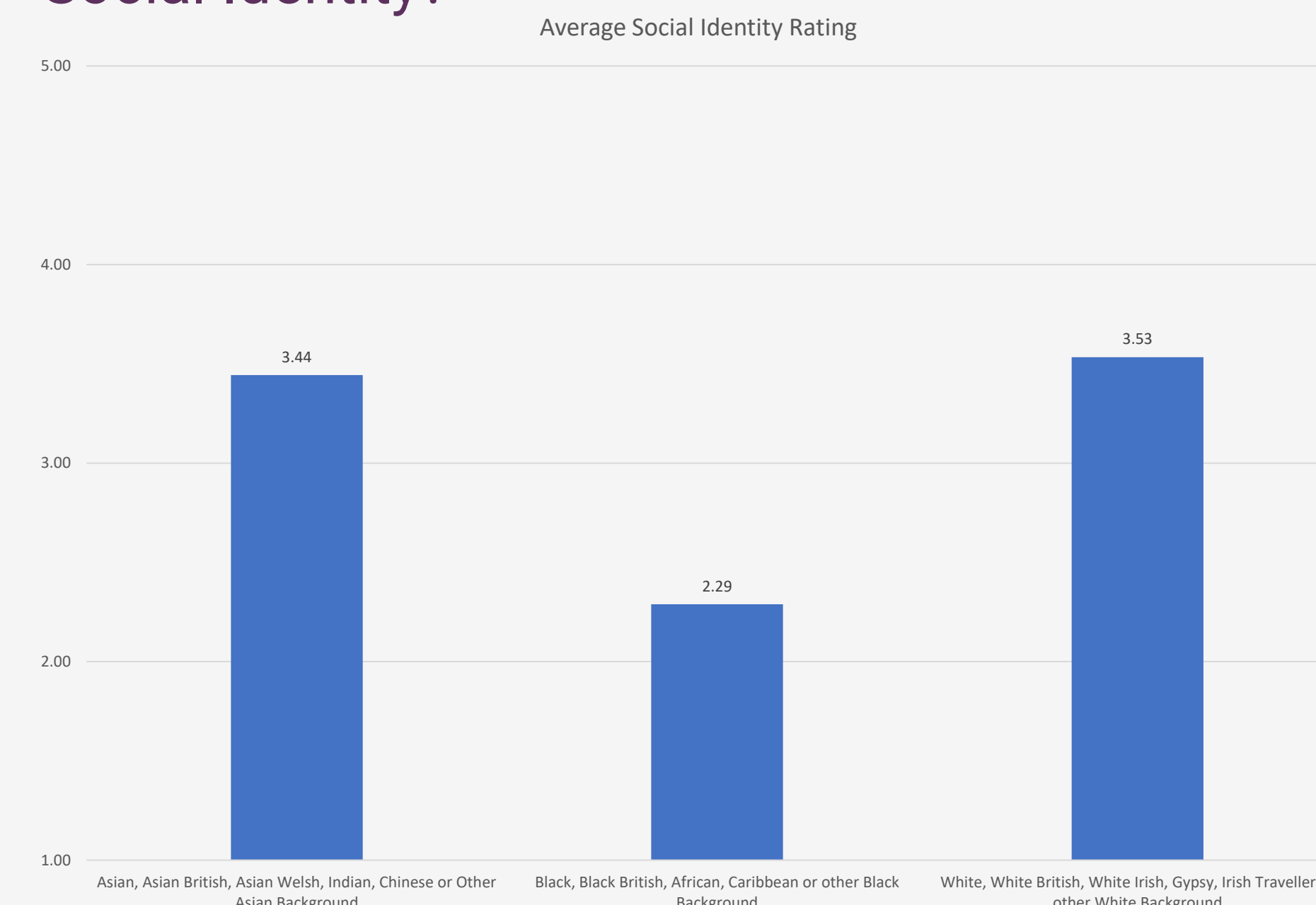
There isn't any discernable difference between ethnic groups' motivation to play sport in general. The responses have also been filtered account for students who currently play a sport at LSE and the results suggest motivation is similar amongst all ethnic groups to play sports.

Strategic Choice?



All ethnic groups indicated that strategic choice isn't a strong reason for not wanting to take part in sports at LSE based on their average rating

Social Identity?



This section of the survey indicated the main discernable differences amongst ethnic groups as Black students ranked a lot lower on the social identity questions which aimed to probe how they feel about the social elements of sports at LSE such as ingroup ties and ability to form a connection with teammates.

"It's like we're from different worlds and our world does not exist at LSE"

The topic of social identity was also the main points highlighted in the focus group discussion as majority of the participants alluded to the feeling of them not fitting in and belonging with the social aspect of sports at LSE which is enough to hinder them from being a willing participant. The notion of feasibility also arose as participants indicated that it's simply not feasible i.e., it's too expensive. Finally, participants highlighted the lack of facilities by LSESU that caters to them specifically as a reason for not taking part. More specifically, there's an institutional void at LSE for adequate treatment of issues facing black students e.g., racism hence their unwillingness to put themselves out there in activities that LSE has to offer.

References

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Recommendations

Reduce Strategic choice barriers for Black students to take part in LSE sports

- Sports at LSE is currently too expensive for many Black students at LSE due to the many costs such as travel, membership, equipment etc.,
- Like LSE bursary that provides additional funding for students below a certain income, LSE sports memberships should have a similar system whereby fees are reduced or removed based on personal circumstances.
- The bureaucracy surrounding help schemes such as hardship fund requires a level of vulnerability that Black students do not feel comfortable conforming to.
- Different process or a less bureaucratic process should be implemented to access help schemes

Provide a safe space and a more inclusive environment for Black students at LSE

- The Social element of LSE athletic union isn't currently inclusive for Black students. They feel like they lose their identity trying to fit in or do not care enough to fit in
- More inclusive events such as the inaugural Black History Month themed sports night that took place this academic year
- Additional events such as bowling night, games night and events that does not require participants to be inebriated or conform to the 'social norms' at LSE should be more encouraged
- Improved facility and efficiency at LSESU for dealing with issues that arise amongst Black students for them to feel safe or know they have somewhere they can turn to in the likely event they face an issue at LSE e.g., discrimination.
- Introduction and backing of a cultural sports team and the introduction of LSEAU inclusivity executive members.