

# Promoting Equity and Social Capital through Sports Infrastructure for Ethnic Minority Communities in Birmingham



UNIVERSITY OF  
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## Overview

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Birmingham, the UK's second-largest city, is home to a diverse population, with over 52% of residents identifying as ethnic minorities. However, systemic barriers within the city's sports infrastructure (including open spaces, parks, and sports facilities etc.) disproportionately affect ethnic minority communities, limiting their access to facilities and opportunities for participation. These barriers perpetuate racial and health inequalities, as well as hinder social integration.

This briefing explores key findings from a British Academy Innovation Fellowship project, working in collaboration with the Birmingham Race Impact Group, concerning ethnic minority communities and highlights recommendations to address the urgent need for equitable and culturally relevant sports infrastructure.

## Key Findings

- **Severe Infrastructure Inequalities:** In Birmingham's most deprived wards—characterised by high ethnic minority populations—there are only 77 sports facilities, averaging 0.79 sports facilities per 1,000 residents. The majority of these facilities are affiliated with local schools, which further underscores the insufficiency of accessible sports infrastructure for the broader community.
- **Health Disparities:** These wards show alarming health indicators, including higher rates of obesity and diabetes and lower life expectancy, demonstrating the connection between inadequate sports infrastructure and poor health outcomes for ethnic minority residents.
- **Key barriers to Access:** Financial constraints; Safety concerns, particularly for women; Cultural norms limiting engagement in sports, and Lack of transportation to access facilities.
- **Limited Positive Perceptions:** Sentiment analysis shows that only 30% of ethnic minority residents express positive views toward sports infrastructure,

compared to 36.4% of policy stakeholders. This highlights a disconnect between policymaker priorities and community needs.

- **Cultural Relevance as an Enabler:** Ethnic minority communities place a high value on spaces that foster belonging, emotional support, and community connections.

## Key Policy Recommendations

- **Increase Sports Infrastructure for Ethnic Minority Communities:** Prioritise infrastructure development in wards with high ethnic minority populations and significant deprivation to address inequities in access.
- **Embed Cultural Relevance in Sports Programming:** Design culturally tailored initiatives, such as women-only sessions, religiously appropriate timings, and culturally specific sports, to enable greater participation.
- **Expand Accessibility Through Localised Facilities:** Adopt the "15-minute city" model to ensure ethnic minority residents can access sports facilities within a short distance from their homes, reducing reliance on transportation.
- **Foster Social Integration through Sport:** Allocate resources to programmes that use sport as a vehicle for building cross-community relationships and enhancing social capital within ethnic minority groups.
- **Use Data to Inform Policymaking:** Leverage computational tools, such as the sports infrastructure dashboard and sentiment analysis, to continuously evaluate the effectiveness of interventions and guide resource allocation.

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