

EMBRACING LIBERATION:
Co-CREATING A VISION FOR
GREATER DIVERSITY AND
INCLUSION AT THE NLBC

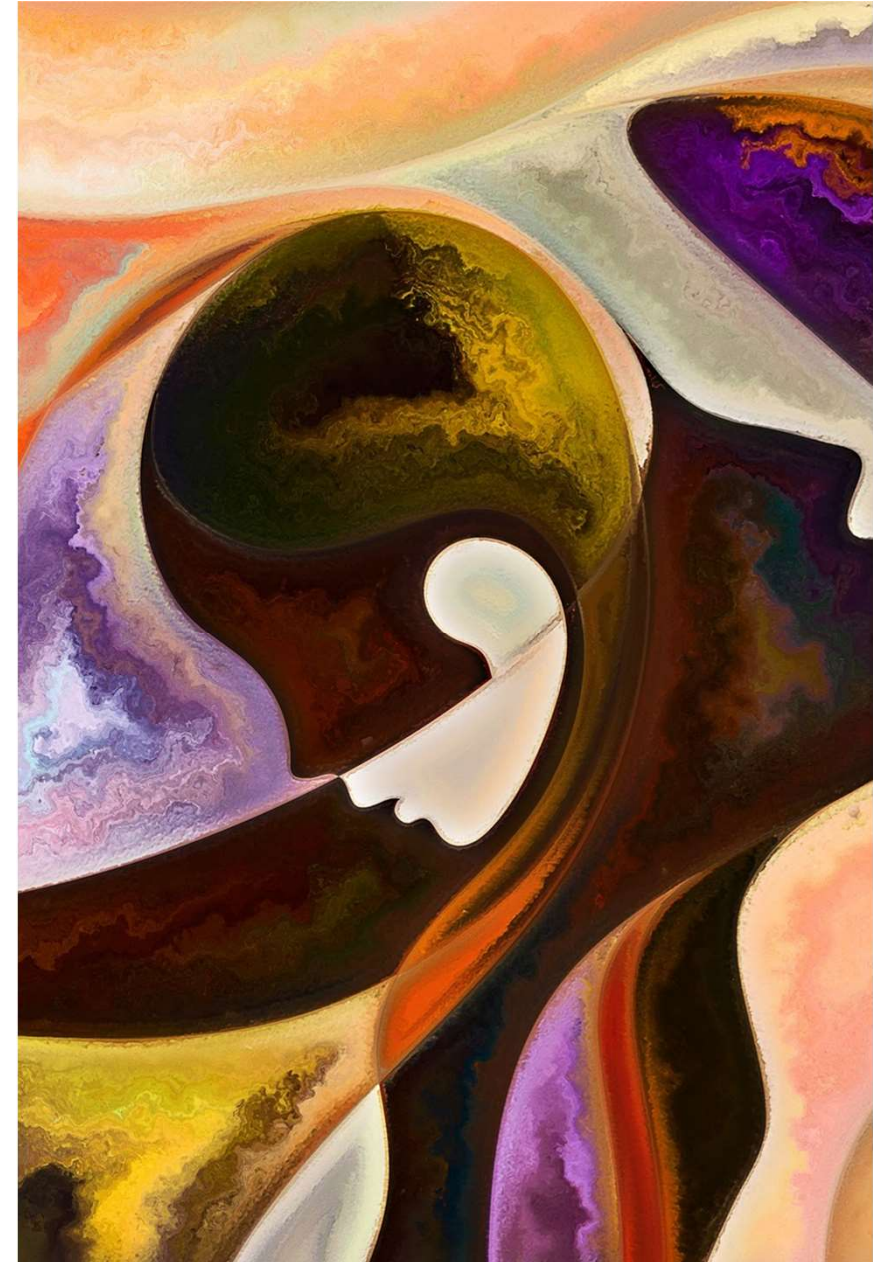
WELCOME!

We're so glad you're here...

Please use this time to settle in, checking that you've got everything you need to be comfortable for the afternoon.

Feel free to say "Hi!" in the chat and let us know a bit about how you are doing just now and what's brought you here

Please also feel free to change your name on the screen if you need to and include your pronoun(s)



The story of our work





WHY WE'RE HERE

To continue to generate interest and enthusiasm for this work

To return to the survey data and collectively create meaning from it.

To begin to co-create a shared vision for what will be in place in 3-5 years as a result of our collective actions.

For all of us to see ourselves in this work, how we may contribute to and benefit from it, and how it can support greater diversity and inclusion at the NLBC.

AGENDA*

Arriving and welcome

Introductions and mtg overview

Community Agreements

Returning to our focus question

Returning to the survey data

Responding to the data

What will be in place in 3-5 years as a result of our actions?

Closing and next steps

*We'll take two 10 min breaks after small group discussions at @ 2:45pm and 3:35pm



Embracing Liberation Community Agreements

Adapted from Visions, Inc.'s "Guidelines for Productive Work Sessions" www.visions-inc.org and "Agreements for Multicultural Interactions at EBMC" www.eastbaymeditation.org

PRACTICE AUTHENTICITY AND TRY IT ON

Let go of having to perform for others while also being willing to "try on" new ideas or ways of doing things that might not be what you prefer or are familiar with.

NOTICE HABITS OF BLAMING OR SHAMING SELF & OTHERS

Practice giving skillful feedback.

MOVE UP / MOVE BACK

Encourage full participation by all present. Take note of who is speaking and who is not. If you tend to speak often, consider "moving back" and vice versa.

PRACTICE SELF FOCUS

Attend to and speak about your own experiences and responses. Do not speak for a whole group or express assumptions about the experience of others.

PRACTICE "BOTH / AND"

When speaking, substitute "and" for "but." This practice acknowledges and honors multiple realities.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Take home learnings but don't identify anyone other than yourself, now or later. If you want to follow up with anyone regarding something they said in this session, ask first and respect their wishes.

RIGHT TO PASS

You can say "I pass" if you don't wish to speak.

PRACTICE MINDFUL LISTENING

Try to avoid planning what you'll say as you listen to others. Be willing to be surprised, to learn something new. Listen with your whole self.

UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN INTENT AND IMPACT

Try to understand and acknowledge impact. Denying the impact of something said by focusing on intent is often more destructive than the initial interaction.

What we're curious about

How might we create an **anti-racist culture** that engenders a commitment to examining:

- **The predominant whiteness of our sangha**, the conditions that have contributed to this and what that communicates to the world,
- **Our unconscious biases** and how these are conditioned by and contribute to upholding institutional and systemic racism, and
- **The harmful effects of racism** in society and our sangha...

In order to transform and flourish as a sangha that **naturally represents the racial diversity of North London**, creating a context where **all sangha members**:

- **feel welcome**, included and that we all fully belong,
- **can encounter and explore the dharma** in ways that are relevant to our background, race, culture and lives,
- can turn towards the dharma as a source of support towards **healing from racialised trauma** and
- **feel fully a part of co-creating a place that's for all of us.**



Responding to the focus question

- Any clarifying questions?
- What words jump out at you?
- What words confuse you or cause discomfort?
- What words excite and energise?
- What does this question make possible that wasn't possible before?

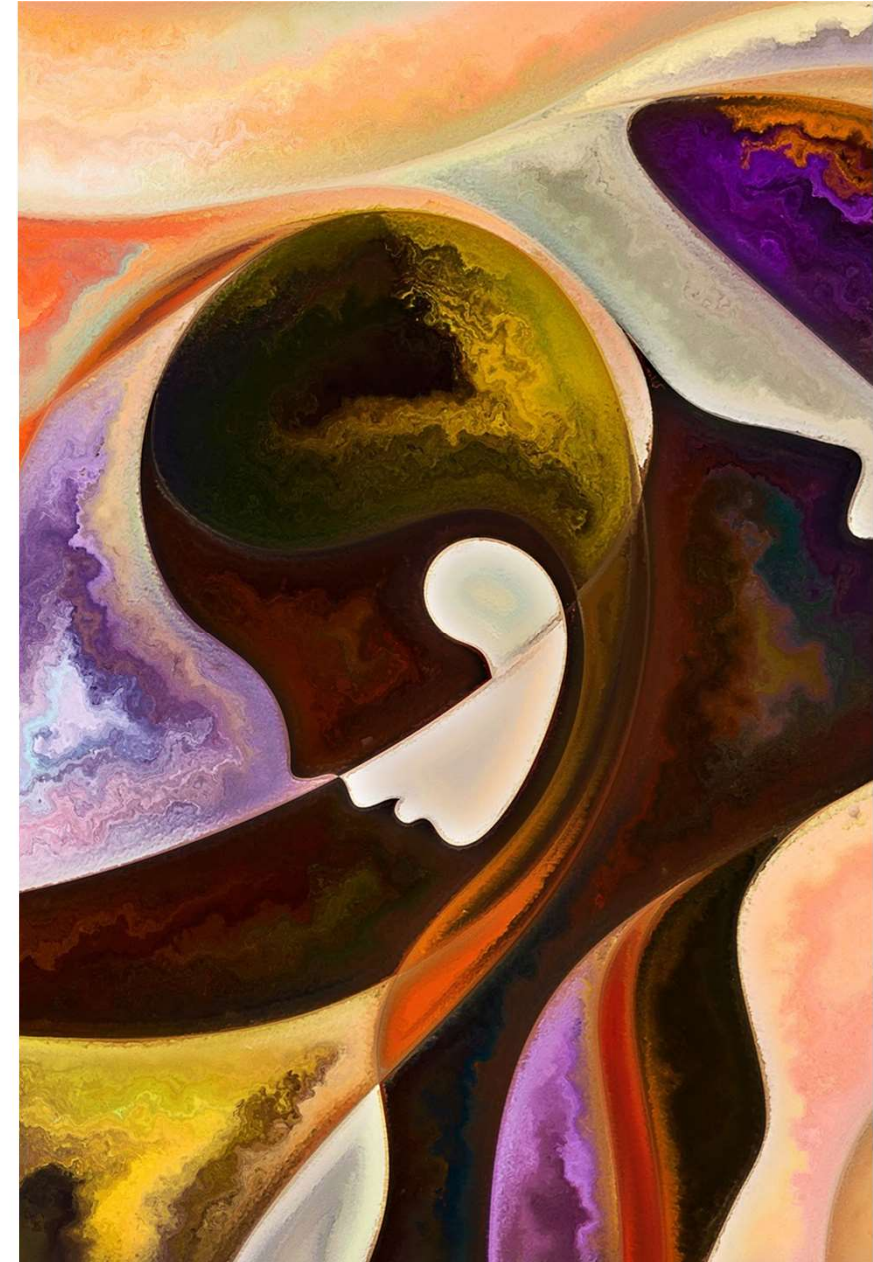
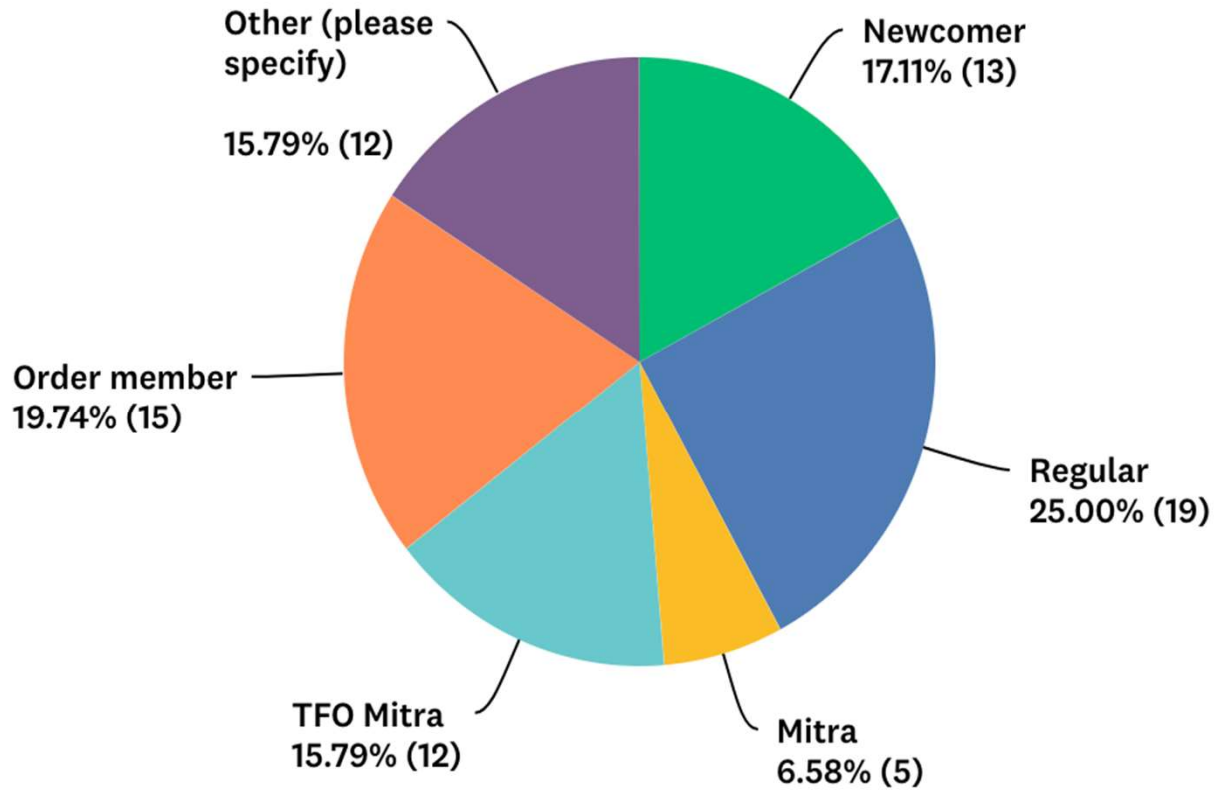
SANGHA SURVEY RESULTS

“Not everything that is faced can be changed. But nothing can be changed until it is faced.”

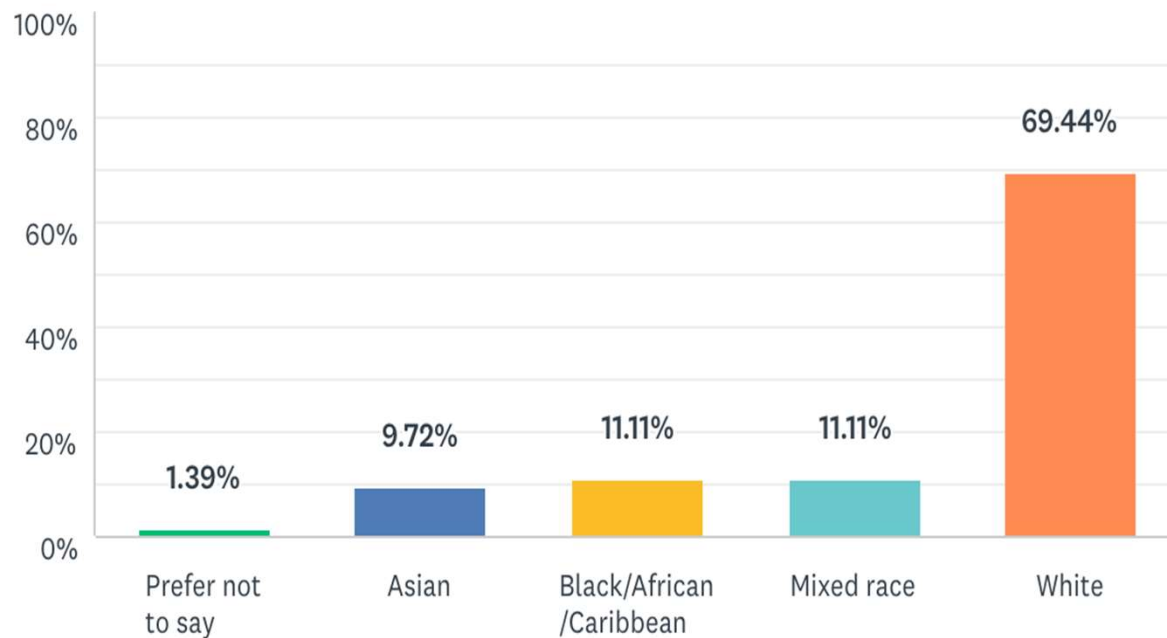
- James Baldwin



92 took the survey, of which 76 are...



OUR RACES/ETHNICITIES...



Of the 72 who answered, roughly:

11.11% Black (13.3% in London)

9.72% Asian (18.5% in London)

11.11% mixed race (5% in London)

69.44% White - compared to 69.8% in London

OUR RACES/ETHNICITIES

Out of 64 who answered...



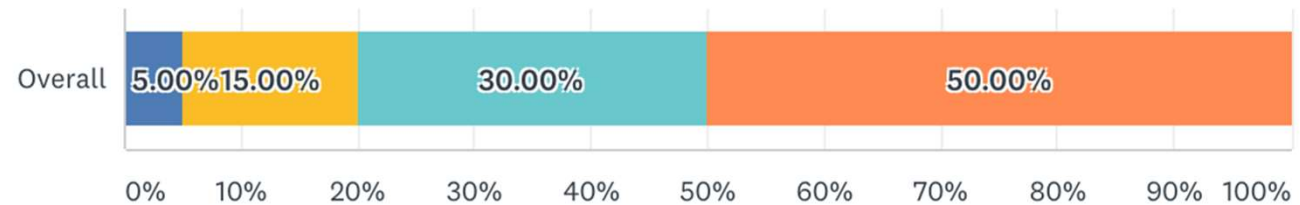
OTHER – 67% white, 33% PoC
(of 9 who answered)

FEELING
WELCOME AND
BELONGING



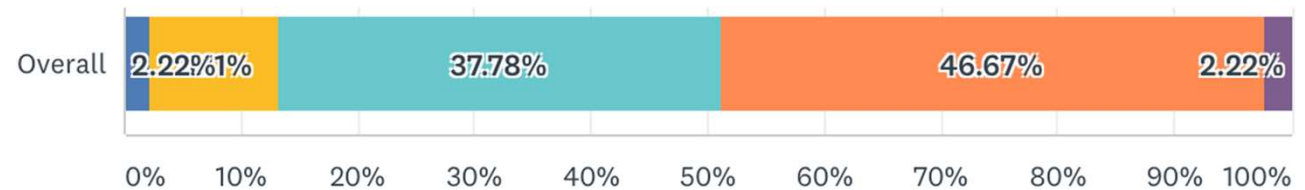
HOW WELCOMING DOES THE CENTRE FEEL TO YOU?

People of Colour
(20 responses)

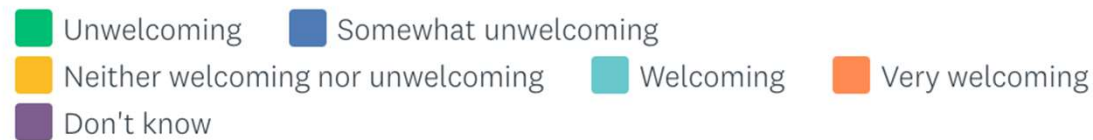


20% reported somewhat unwelcoming or neither

White
(45 responses)

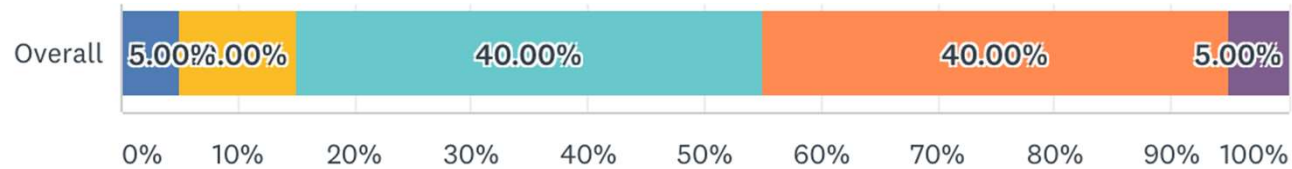


13% reported somewhat unwelcoming or neither



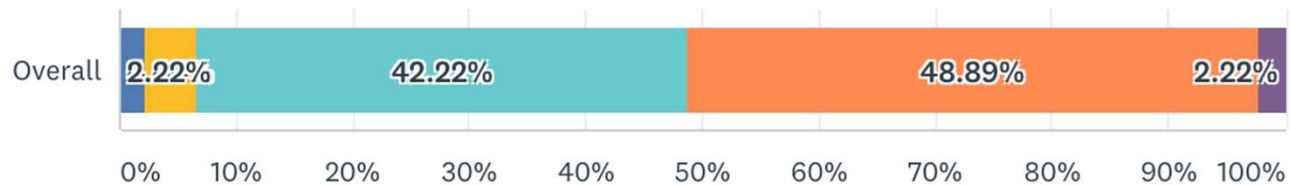
HOW WELCOMING DOES THE COMMUNITY FEEL TO YOU?

People of Colour
(20 responses)

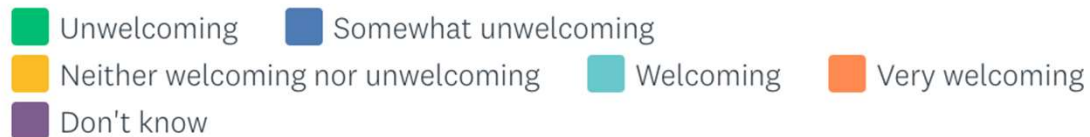


15% reported somewhat unwelcoming or neither

White
(45 responses)



7% reported somewhat unwelcoming or neither



HOW I FEEL WELCOME/UNWELCOME...



“Not very welcoming when coming into the building unless they know you already.”



“Welcoming- a friendly smile. Unwelcoming- a longer look of an enquiring nature.”



“I have often found that reception staff are absent or busy.”



“When people listen and value your presence and contribution.”



“I think it can vary a bit - the entrance isn't ideal and receptionists vary but I personally feel welcome.”



“It starts with the layout of the building. Newcomers are unsure of where to go when they come into the building. It's not obvious where to go.”

HOW I FEEL WELCOME/ UNWELCOME...

"Someone introduced me to a member of sangha and that person's 1st question was where I am from...it was a jarring interaction and I felt really unwelcome then, also nobody of the bystanders seemed to find any fault with this. I have since tried to avoid that person."

"The class leaders are always very friendly and approachable."

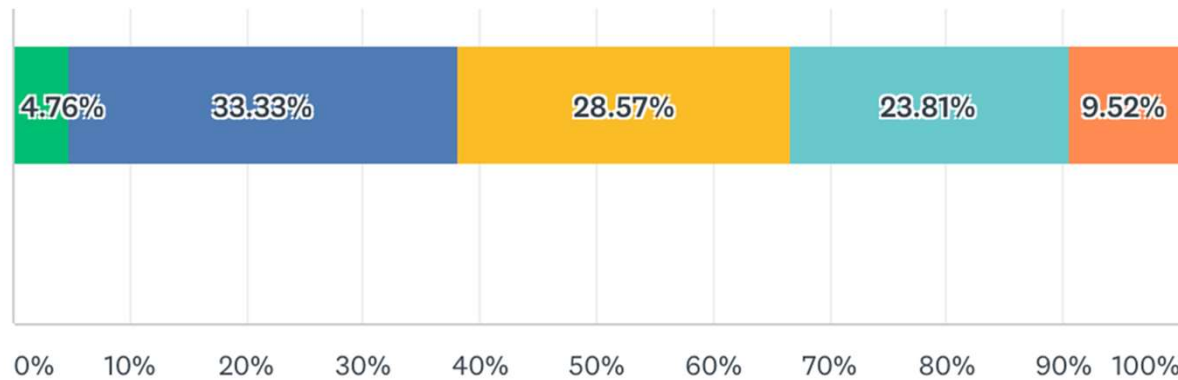
"I feel welcomed by members of the sangha and centre team...the only time I have felt unwelcome has been when I made a suggestion...to gather together at a protest and was told fairly strongly that this is not something the centre would do - I was made to feel like what I had to say was unwelcome and that I shouldn't be raising it at the centre."

"I have felt welcome at every online class, also whenever I've rung the centre in the past."

"I haven't felt unwelcomed in any specific situation but I have experienced a general feeling of not fitting in due to coming from a different cultural background."

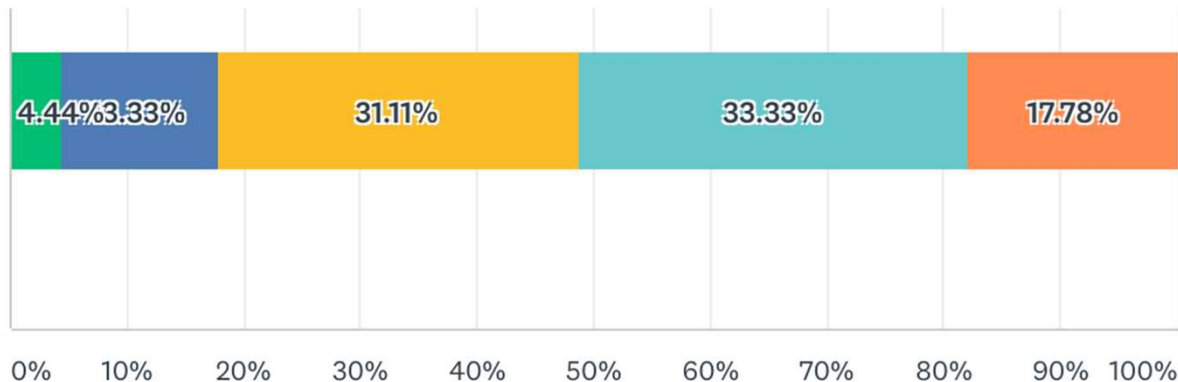
HOW MUCH DO YOU FEEL YOU BELONG AT THE NLBC?

People
of Colour
(21 responses)



38% none at all
or a little

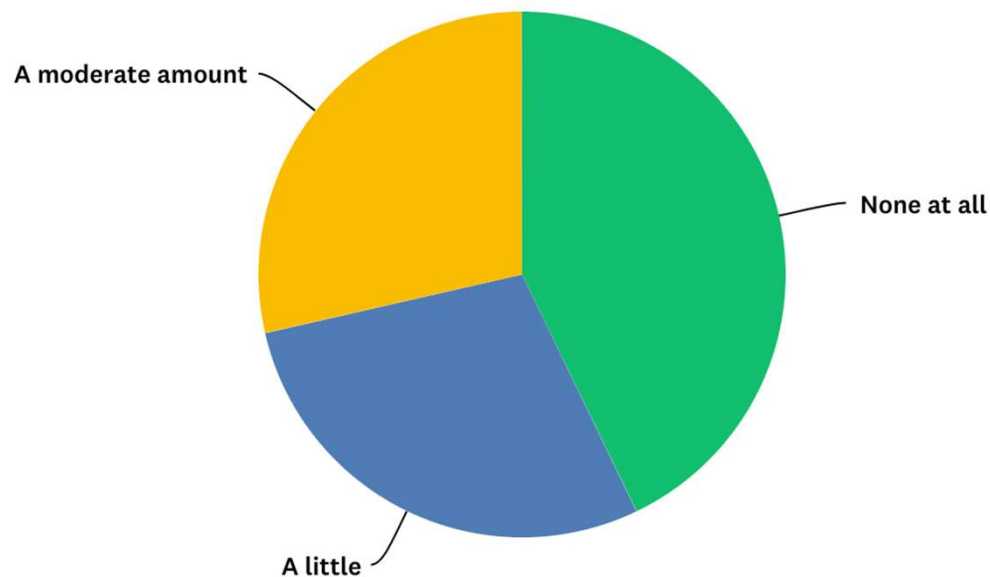
White
(45 responses)



18% none at all
or a little

None at all A little A moderate amount A lot A great deal

HOW MUCH DID THOSE WHO LEFT FEEL THEY BELONGED...



“Considering that is often difficult to approach a place or event where there is no one I identify with I would have appreciated a friendly welcome, which I did not get. Also I often sat alone and felt excluded by longstanding members/groups who were always white.”

“Greetings and smiles are important. I was generally greeted well.”

HOW I FEEL I BELONG/ DON'T BELONG...

"I'm not sure if it is ok to use the centre beyond the drumming area."

"Volunteering definitely made me feel a greater sense of connection to the centre, as well as being part of a mitra study group."

"Mostly positive experiences. On one occasion however, I was told that I couldn't join the meditation class I wanted to join & had to join the beginner class (both taking place at the same time) which I found off putting as I have been meditating for years."

"I think I don't feel like I know the practice and lives of the people who are involved in the centre. So I don't feel a sense of community or friendship. I don't think people reach out to each other to really get involved in each others lives and reveal themselves."

HOW MY SENSE OF BELONGING HAS CHANGED OVER TIME

“I don't know if it has changed a lot but my own understanding and acceptance of the situation and its limitations have changed.”

“I have enjoyed it more over more recent years (5 or so), as it has grown and we have more OMs and a chapter and more people I relate to as friends and enjoy.”

“I didn't feel particularly welcomed when I first came along in 2002 but gradually as people got to know me I felt part of the community. I hope the Centre has got more welcoming over the years.”

“Yes - as I have attended more often I have felt a greater sense of connection. Becoming a mitra made me feel that I was someone who belonged at the centre.”

“My sense of belonging has changed through holding open and honest conversations with my mitra group on inclusivity and cultural differences. I'd like to see more of that being addressed in general in the centre.”

“I became involved in the drumming workshops...then felt the more open attitude of the chair and centre team to running different types of events, one of which was a Buddhist teacher from outside Triratna who involved more diverse participants.”

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION



BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION FOR POC

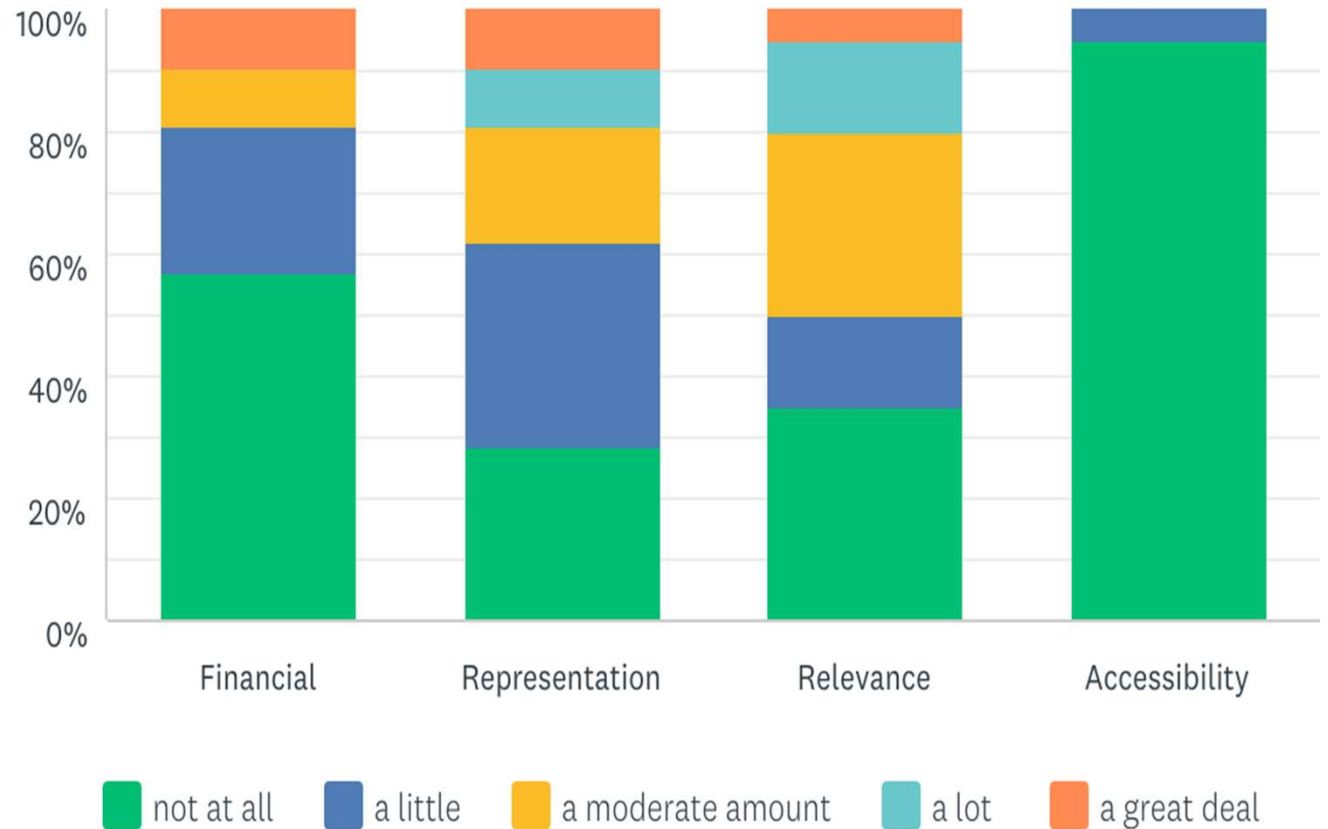
Of 21 who answered:

50% reported **relevance** as a moderate to great barrier

38% reported **representation** as a moderate to great barrier

19% reported **financial barriers** as moderate to great

0% reported **accessibility** as a moderate to great barrier



BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION FOR WHITE FOLK

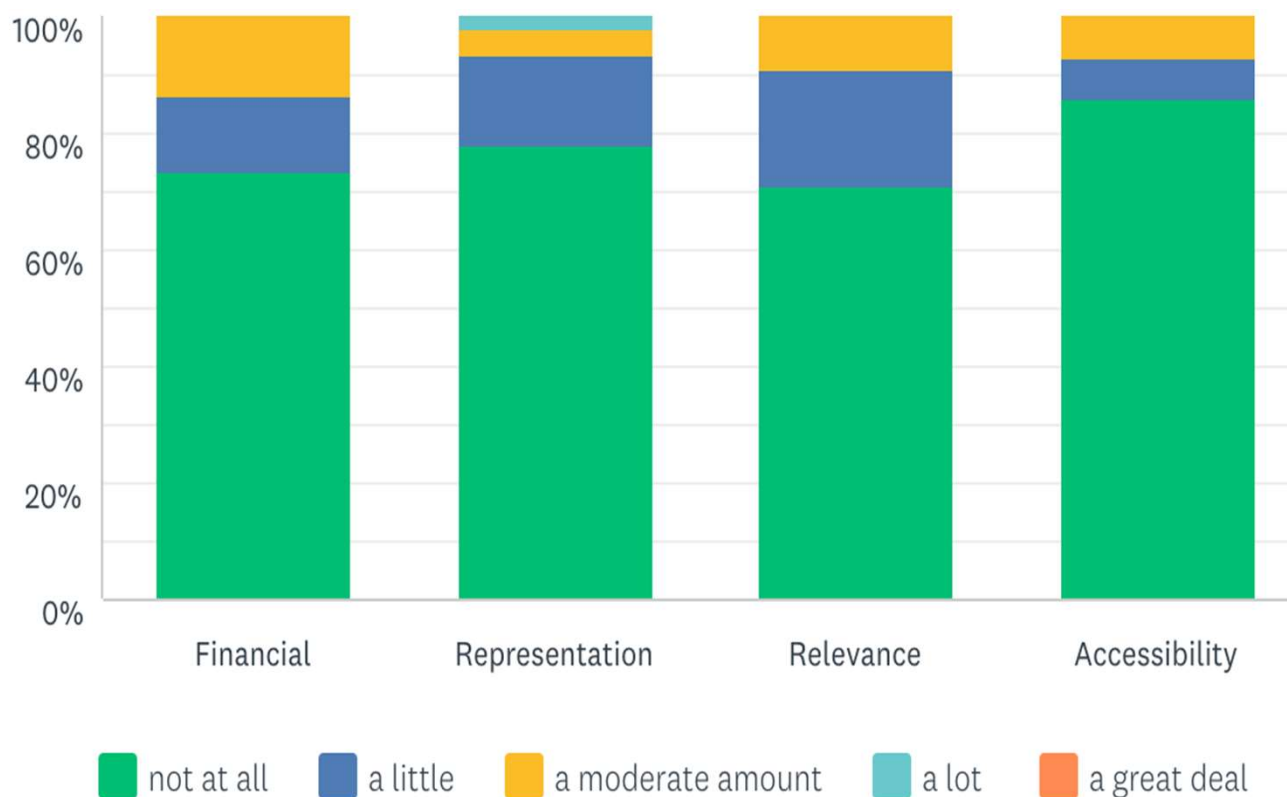
Of 45 who answered:

9% reported **relevance** as a moderate to great barrier

7% reported **representation** as a moderate to great barrier

13% reported **financial barriers** as moderate to a lot of a barrier

7% reported **accessibility** as a moderate barrier

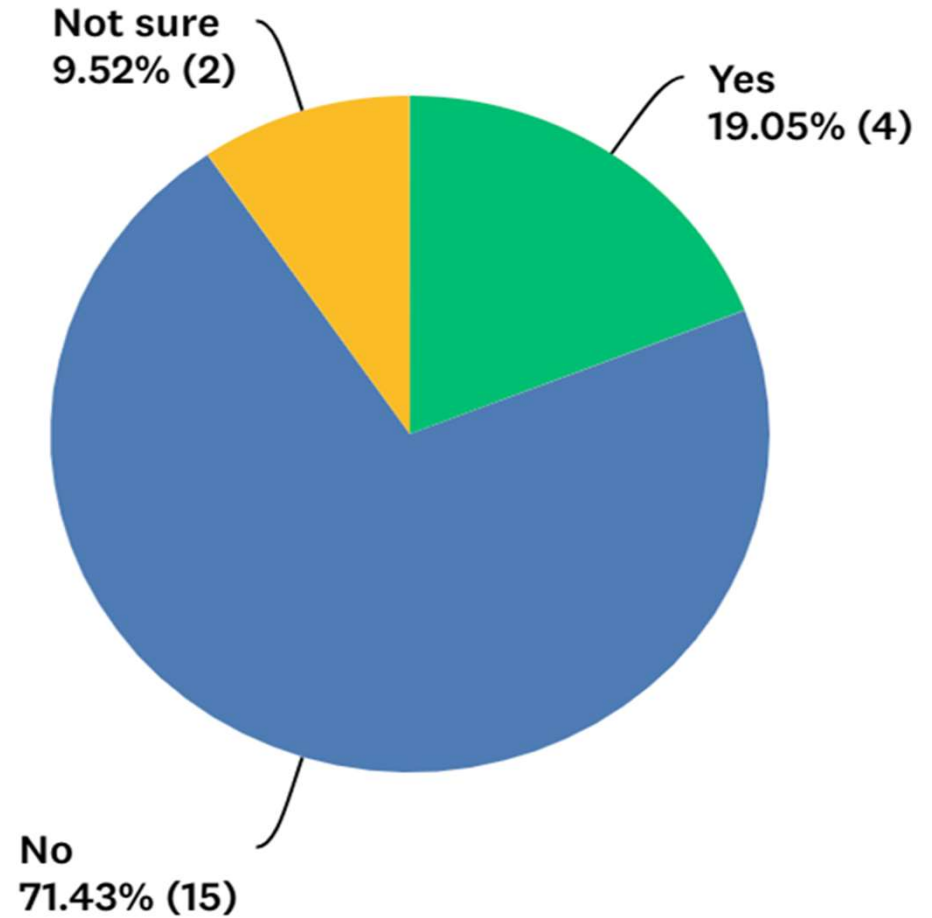


EXPERIENCES OF RACISM



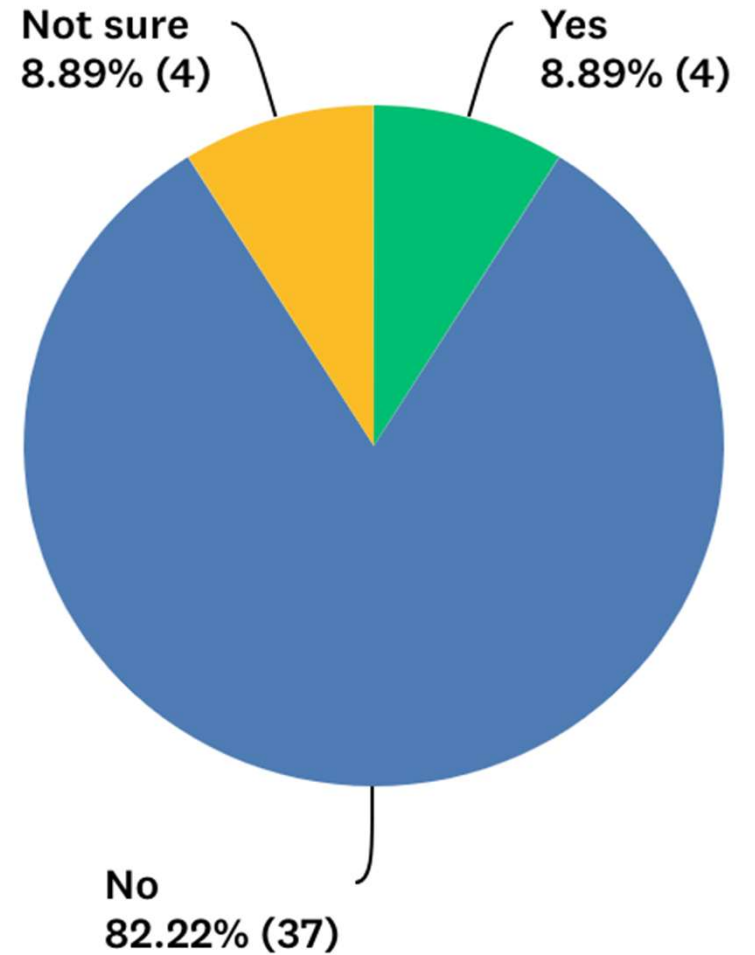
HAVE YOU EVER EXPERIENCED BEHAVIOUR THAT MADE YOU FEEL EXCLUDED OR UNCOMFORTABLE, SUCH AS ANYTHING THAT FELT TO YOU LIKE IMPLICIT OR EXPLICIT RACISM?

Out of 21 POC who answered, 19% said YES and 10% were not sure.



HAVE YOU EVER EXPERIENCED BEHAVIOUR THAT MADE YOU FEEL EXCLUDED OR UNCOMFORTABLE, SUCH AS ANYTHING THAT FELT TO YOU LIKE IMPLICIT OR EXPLICIT RACISM?

Out of 45 white people who answered, 9% said YES and 9% were not sure.



WHAT HAPPENED AND HOW DID IT IMPACT YOU?

“Yes, supposedly funny comments were made about people with a different skin colour. It was said in jest, in my presence. I'm sure the person would be embarrassed to be called a racist or prejudiced. It was an older person in their 70's and they were using terminology that was prevalent 30 or 40 years ago..”

“I do recall one speaker, particularly who really showed his lack of understanding or empathy towards racism. But I don't think he was a staff member and it was not directed at me or anyone in particular I don't think. It was his lack of experience.”

WHAT HAPPENED AND HOW DID IT IMPACT YOU?

“I did once observe a person of colour visiting the shop who was dressed in a less conventional way, seemed to cause a reaction of mild surprise in the person on reception...I felt uncomfortable that someone's difference in dress and appearance might mean the visitor felt they were less accepted and responded to differently than other people attending.”

“I've not encountered blatant racism but I've seen and heard a lack of self-awareness by white people about their own levels of ignorance about racism in themselves.”

WHAT HAPPENED AND HOW DID IT IMPACT YOU?

“Ignoring black or brown people coming to the centre for the first time. Grouping behaviours that exclude some on the fringes, making them stand around with no one to talk to until you welcome them yourself. Facial expressions of unfriendliness...speaking to you in simplified language and strained voice tones. Conversations that express racist views...and when you object there's silence and exclusion from future interaction.”

“A lack of respect for Asian names & a lack of acknowledgment for racial / cultural aspects of teachings. This can be seen as cultural appropriation/ imperialism.”

RESPONDING TO THE DATA

- What jumped out at you?
- What excited, surprised, confused, concerned you?
- What are you curious to learn more about?
- What are the implications of these outcomes on our efforts to support greater diversity and inclusion at the NLBC?

What will be in place in 3-5 years as a result of our actions?

- Individual brainstorm of up to 10 ideas
- Small group sharing and combining of ideas (4-5 ideas/group using 3-5 words to describe each idea)
- Large group sharing of your 3-4 clearest ideas
- Putting similar ideas in pairs
- Sharing any more ideas and creating new pairs
- Combining pairs of ideas to create “buckets”
- Naming idea “buckets”

DIVING DEEPER...

Research conducted by Vijayatara on the experiences of BAME people in Triratna:

[Vijayatara's research](#)

Letter from London-based Black and Asian Order Members

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/order-connection/threads/letter-order-group-black-and-asian-order-members-london>

Courageous conversations about race, hosted by the Buddhist Centre Online

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLJlu0AXm6KerNZK8IkBm6cBNaPWVtYOXt>

Awareness is revolutionary: Talking about race and Buddhism - Suryagupta and Subhuti

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/community-toolkit/awareness-revolutionary-talking-about-race-and-buddhism>



DIVING DEEPER...

A way forward? race, bias and freedom - Suryagupta and Subhuti

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/highlights/awareness-revolutionary-part-two-race-bias-and-freedom>

Welcoming Liberation: A space for thriving BIPOC/BAME Dharma and community connection

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/highlights/welcoming-liberation-space-thriving-bipoc-bame-dharma-and-community-connection>

Sunday meditation for people of colour – LBC and WLBC

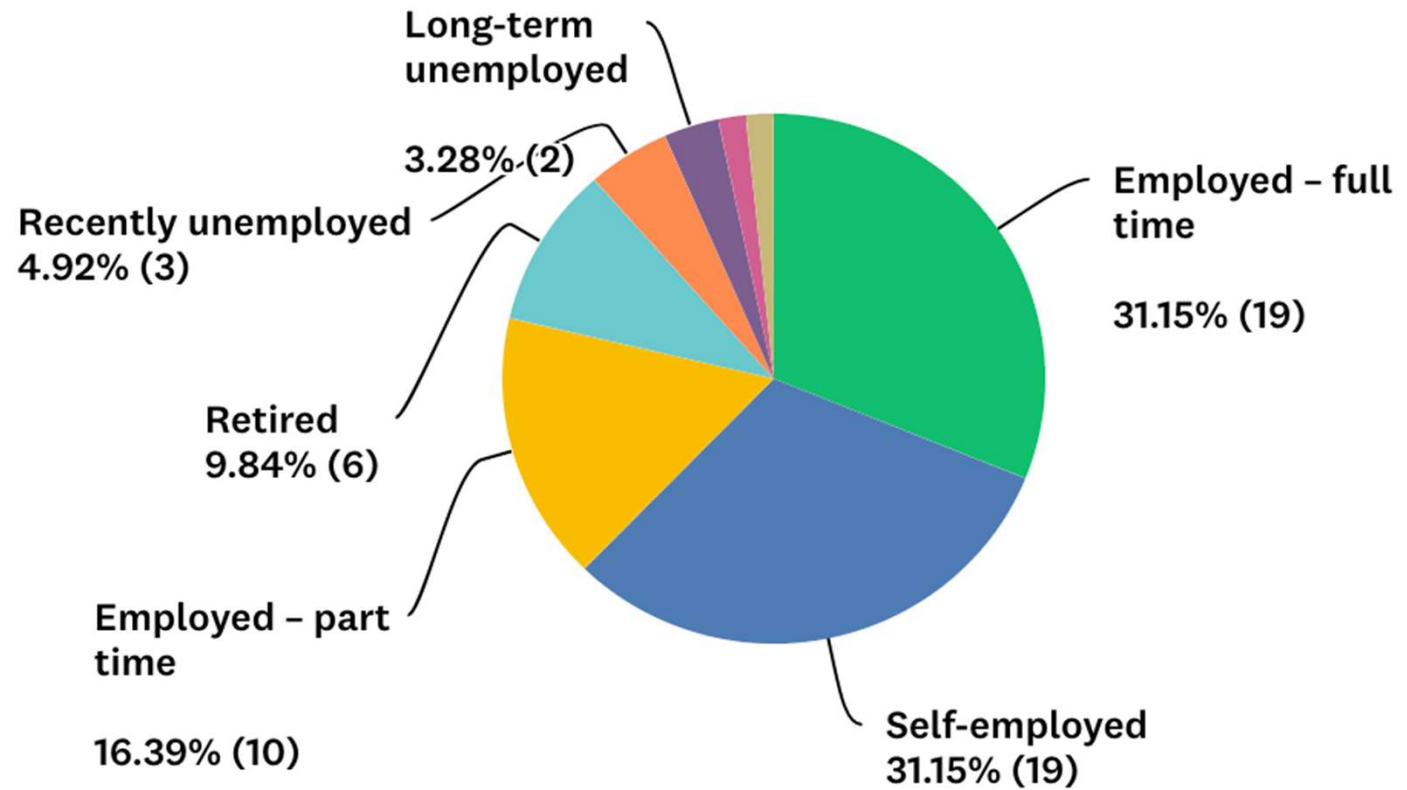
<https://www.londonbuddhistcentreonline.com/blog/events/sunday-meditation-for-people-of-colour-5/>

(White) Awareness is Revolutionary project

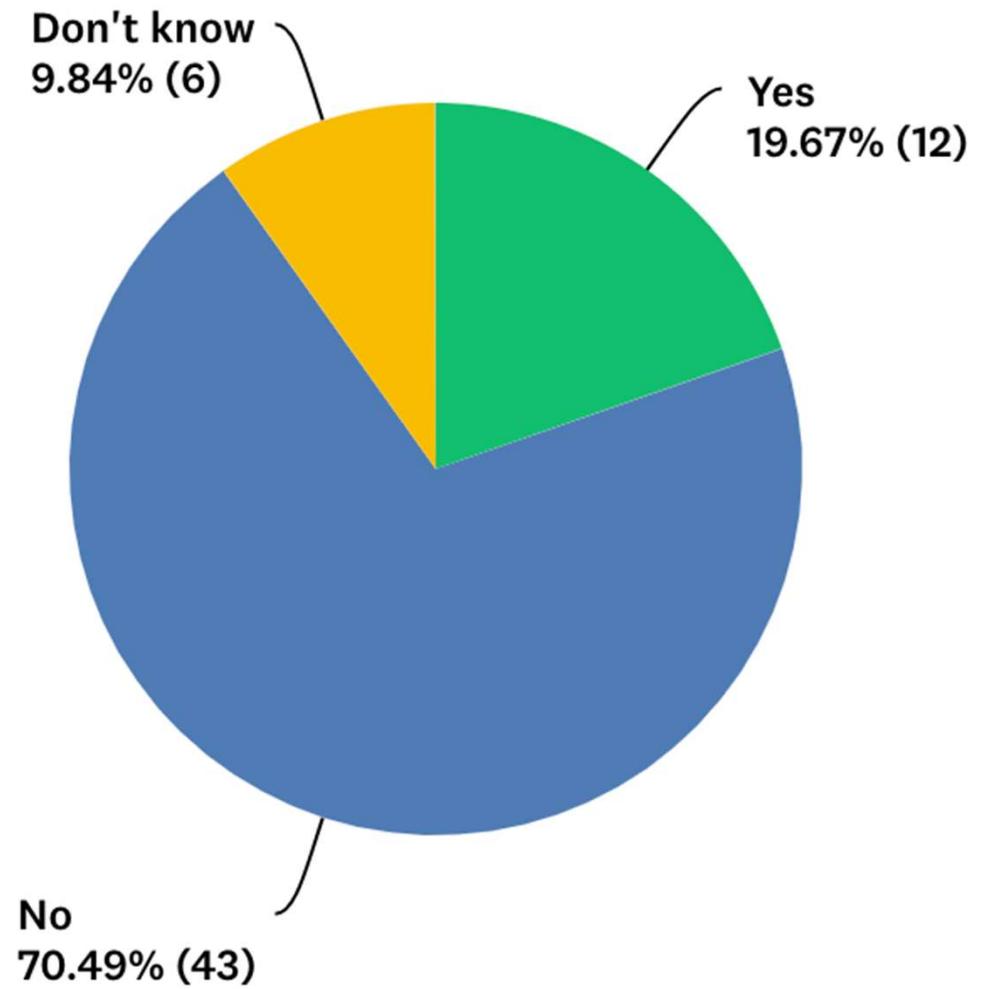
<https://www.awarenessisrevolutionary.com/>



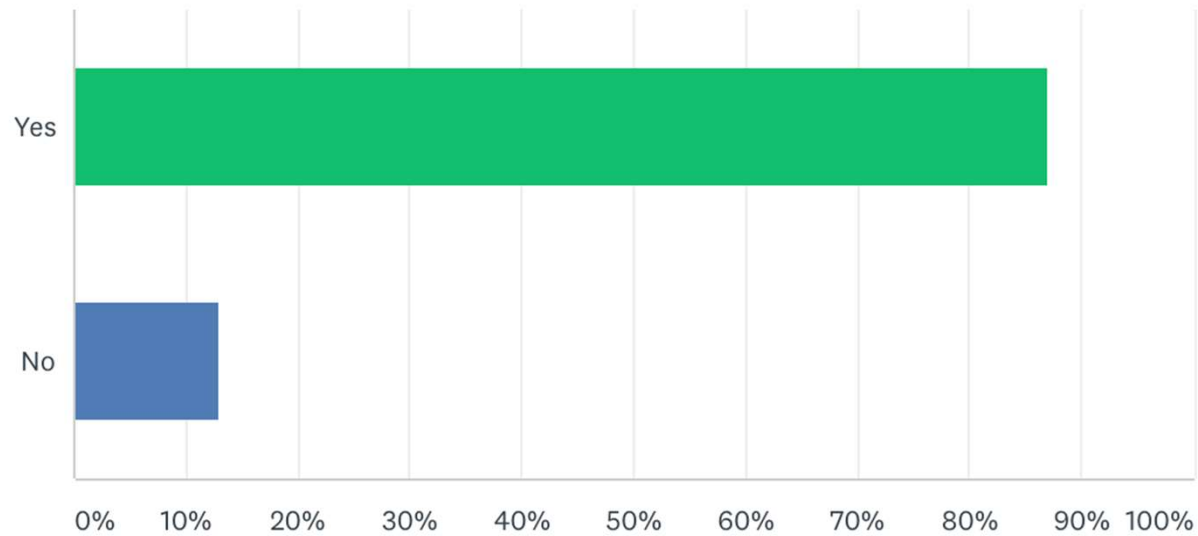
EMPLOYMENT STATUS...



COMPARED TO OTHERS, DO YOU SEE YOURSELF AS COMING FROM A LOWER SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND



STILL INVOLVED IN OTHER TRIRATNA PROJECTS



30 RESPONDENTS HOLD ROLES AROUND THE CENTRE

Centre Team – 4

Trustee – 4

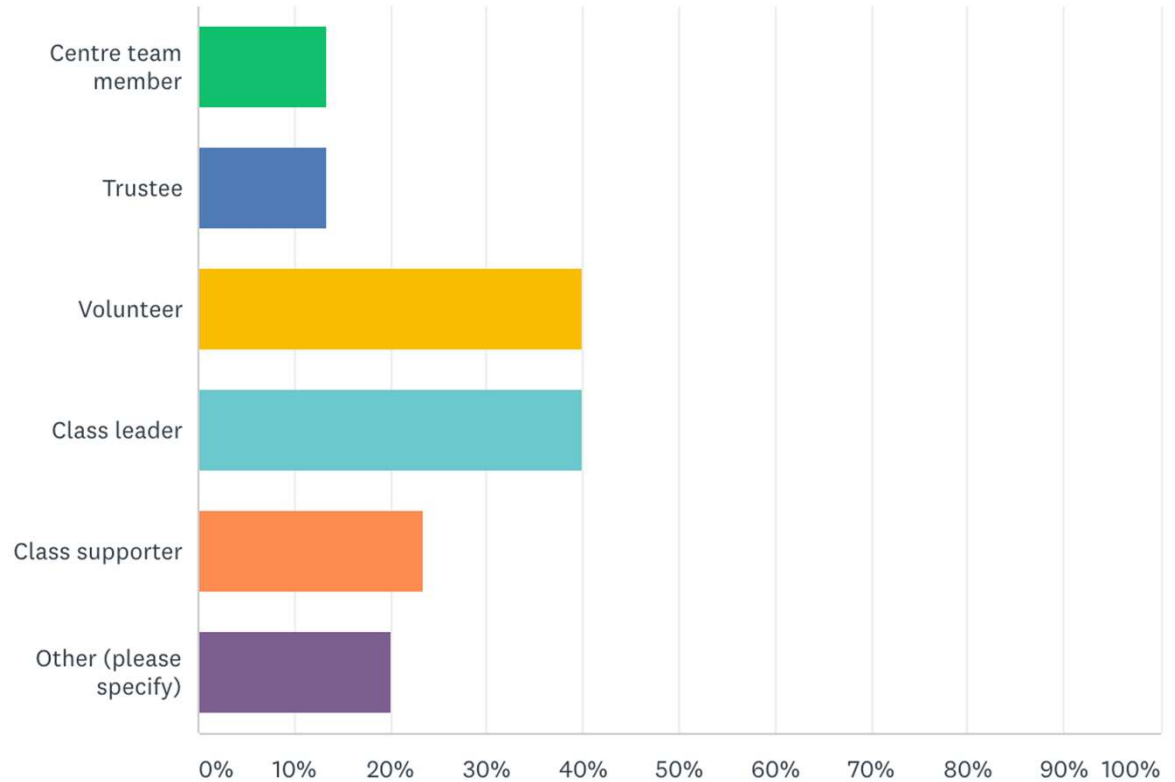
Volunteer – 12

Class leader – 12

Class supporter – 7

Other – 6

(volunteer meditation teacher,
president)



What will be in place in 3-5 years as a result of our actions?

Training

RDI awareness training

Training for all who lead, teach, work and volunteer

people (teachers, volunteers) are aware of behaviour that can feel excluding

Acknowledging sources of teaching in Triratna

Training for to be more inclusive for white people

Feedback

gathering feedback on an ongoing basis

Annual sangha survey to see how we're doing

Welcoming Space and community

'Meet and greet' people

welcoming signage

make reception area feel more welcoming

centre accessible for wheelchairs

Outreach and engagement

being more outward looking/being kind

curiosity towards those coming along to the centre

Offering ways to get involved

ways of encouraging kalyana mitrata (spiritual friendship)

PoC specific programming

Regular events specifically for PoC

Targeted intro courses

External networks and resources

Networking, connection and links with other RDI kulas

Looking for resources and support beyond Triratna

Diverse and relevant materials and programming

Diversity of books available in library and book shop

Celebrate Black History Month, etc.

more diverse programming - music

diverse perspectives in teaching

Clear and transparent processes to make materials and opportunities more accessible and diverse

Access to BOOKS: Library is not accessible unless you know the 'right' people - needs support to become more available to greater diversity of people (R4)

Volunteering: need a more open and transparent process for those becoming volunteers - it is not clear how to become more involved and you need to be 'invited' and this may screen out POC (R4)

Strategy to have more POC on teams, leading to more diversity in training teaching and volunteering