Responses within the Historical Association and within schools to the RHS (2018) report *Race, Ethnicity & Equality in UK History*

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In 2019 the Historical Association included a section on diversity in their annual survey of history teachers in England.

Responses from 285 history teachers working in 278 different schools
(213 non-selective, state-maintained, 15 grammar schools, 32 independent, 4 sixth-form colleges 3 special schools)

The ethnicity of the respondents:

261 (93%) described themselves as white
   including 247 white British, 4 white Irish, 1 white gypsy or traveller, 9 white other
9 respondents (3%) described themselves as Asian or Asian British
3 respondents (1%) identified themselves as having some kind of black heritage –
   1 as black African/Caribbean/Black British and 2 as ‘mixed’ or multiple heritage, including black and white
Respondents were asked to identify the extent to which the student take-up of GCSE and A-level history reflected the ethnic diversity or heritage of their school.

### Perceptions of take-up at GCSE

- **Total**: There is a very close match
- **Comprehensive/Academy Free**: Students from certain ethnic backgrounds are somewhat under-represented
- **Gram**: Students from certain ethnic backgrounds are significantly under-represented
- **Independent**: Students from certain ethnic backgrounds do not tend to take history at all

### Perceptions of take-up at A-level

- **Total**: There is a very close match
- **Comprehensive/Academy Free**: Students from certain ethnic backgrounds are somewhat under-represented
- **Gram**: Students from certain ethnic backgrounds are significantly under-represented
- **Independent**: Students from certain ethnic backgrounds do not tend to take history at all
Perceptions of take-up and assumptions about the influences on this

When asked to identify which groups tend to be under-represented in terms of history take-up, teachers identified Chinese, Asian, Black and Roma students as being less likely to take history. Few gave any reasons for this but those that did, mentioned that Chinese and Asian students were more likely to take STEM subjects at A-level.

Where schools claimed to have been successful in attracting large numbers of minority ethnic students, teachers were asked to suggest what they thought were the reasons for this success.

15 relevant responses were given, focusing on:
• the quality of teaching, which resulted in students securing high grades;
• making history relevant to the lives of students; and
• selection of topics that reflected a more inclusive curriculum.
To see how schools had reacted to issues associated with the representativeness of their curriculum, respondents were asked whether their department had made any recent changes to the curriculum that might help to address the kinds of concern raised by the report.

Any recent changes made to respond to issues raised by the RHS report

![Graph showing the percentage of recent changes made by different types of schools.](image)
A further question was asked to explore whether schools had made any other changes to include more diverse representation of people in the past or to engage a wider pool of students.
Curriculum changes: 55 responses mainly focused on topics taught

Although we have not necessarily included diversity for the sake of diversity in our Key Stage 3 curriculum, we have tried to be more conscious of 'good history' being that which gives voice to many. In that spirit we have tried to include a great diversity of 'voices' in our existing curriculum, as well as trying to make use of resources such as 'Meanwhile Elsewhere' to pursue this further.

[Teacher 10, comprehensive/academy/free]

I have redesigned the whole Key Stage 3 curriculum so that it is much more diverse and representative of gender, race, sexuality and disability; this has been the focus of the curriculum redesign. For example, including units on women and power in medieval England; Black Tudors; British Empire's impact on Britain.

[Teacher 66, comprehensive/academy/free]

Especially at Key Stage 3 we are consciously creating enquiries around topics that go beyond British history. This has focused for now on Islamic Empires, India prior to the British Empire, and a topic on Mansa Musa. We think this has helped many of our students feel more positive about the curriculum because it is more representative.

[Teacher 88, comprehensive/academy/free]
We always try to include a focus on women in each unit (especially as a girls’ school from Years 7–11). We plan this year to try to incorporate some activities looking at other groups in society (e.g. those with disabilities, LGBT).

[Teacher 212, grammar]

We have made changes to our Key Stage 3 curriculum to include more on immigration, women, the black Tudors. We are attempting to make our curriculum at Key Stage 3 more global and European.

[Teacher 220, independent]

We have consciously tried to consider what life was like for ordinary people in the past – during the reigns of the monarchs studied. We have also tried to consider missing voices – of the poor and women.

[Teacher 45, comprehensive/academy/free]
The kinds of changes being made

In summary:

- A tendency to focus on scope available to them at Key Stage 3
- Some decisions related to GCSE – teaching about migration and/or the British Empire applied to choice of units
- 1 school pointed to decision to teach an A-level unit on the Middle East

- Inclusion of Africa mentioned most frequently
  – usually to ensure that the continent did not simply feature in relation to the transatlantic slave trade
- Specific mention also of India and China.
- Some deliberate efforts to teach Black British history
  – e.g. using Kaufman’s ‘Black Tudors’,
- Deliberate efforts to ensure that teaching of the First and Second World Wars properly acknowledged the diversity of the forces involved and their global reach.

Doing justice to women’s experience was as prominent as concerns about ethnic diversity
A few departments made specific reference to inclusion of LGBT experience in the past
Occasional evidence of consulting young people themselves

Feedback from students indicated that they did not want our celebration of Black History Month to revolve around negative aspects of slavery, celebration of the achievements of a small group of individuals in the face of discrimination, etc. and felt our curriculum was similarly limited. Discussion in the media regarding the need for explorations of empire and imperialism also coloured curriculum planning within the department. As a result, we have looked for opportunities to study pre- and post-colonial Africa, India and the Americas, as well as the experience of BME communities in modern British history.

[Teacher 119, comprehensive/academy/free]

The students’ LGBT society have asked for more representation in the curriculum. This will be considered in the following school year.

[Teacher 119, comprehensive/academy/free]
Initiatives within the Historical Association

- Research project to explore the views of young people and their parents in relation to history up-take
  - questionnaire available online and/or hard copy (e.g. at parents’ evenings)
  - parallel survey of the views of adults engaged with particular community history initiatives

- Teacher Fellowship programmes (building on the approach used with England’s Immigrants project, focused on Britain and the Transatlantic Slave Trade (UCL Legacies of British Slave-ownership project)
  HA always open to new suggestions – fruitful use of ‘impact’ or ‘knowledge exchange’ funding

- Diversity as an HA Strategic priority (regular review of publications as well as CPD offer)
  Teaching History over last 2 years has had articles exploring:
  - young people’s views of who can be a historian;
  - migration (England’s Immigrants, migration in Tudor England; over time; within family histories)
  - decolonisation (Polychronicon: ‘What have historians been arguing about…)
  - relationship between religion & science in Islam (including Africa)
  - the Raj at War (Yasmin Khan)
  (as well as articles on inclusion of disabilities in history and reviewing successive approaches to women’s history)
Important issues in agitating or planning for curriculum change in schools

The new Ofsted Inspection Framework (in use since September 2019) has re-focused schools’ attention on the ‘quality of education’ by which they mean the nature of the curriculum (and who has access to it).

### GCSE (9-1)

Teachers’ perceptions of the new GCSEs mean that they remain acutely conscious of the amount and detail of substantive knowledge that their students’ require. Developing their students’ knowledge means developing their own knowledge. Change always feels risky.

There is a strong movement in the history education community (as reflected in sessions at the HA and SHP conferences) to ensure that school history is connected to the professional practice of historians. If academics can find ways to work with teachers there is a keen appetite for this.
Questions to consider

1. Do history teachers have an accurate view of the take-up of history within their schools in relation to the proportion of students from BME backgrounds?

2. How can universities help schools to change young people’s perceptions of who historians are and what they actually do?

3. What are the most cost and time effective ways for historians to ensure that their research (in relation to more diverse histories) is taken up by teachers?