# Public scepticism grows over NCVO’s adoption of “global majority” to replace BAME



In recent discussions about ethnicity and identity in Britain, the term "global majority" has emerged as a suggested replacement for the previously used acronym, BAME (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic). Coined by academic Rosemary Campbell-Stephens in 2003, this terminology has been adopted by various institutions, including the BBC and the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), as a means to shift the narrative around non-white populations from one of minority status to majority status on a global scale. However, recent polling from YouGov highlights a significant disconnect between this advocacy and public perception. Only a third of ethnic minority Britons have even heard of the term, and fewer than one in ten have used it as a descriptor for their own identity.

This disparity is particularly concerning in light of the NCVO's intent to promote inclusive language that challenges the dominance of white-centric narratives. The NCVO's adoption of "global majority" aims to reflect the diverse experiences of its members and advocate for a more empowering collective identity. Yet, the terminology has been met with scepticism; many argue that it fails to accurately encompass the lived realities of various ethnic groups, including white minorities such as Gypsy, Roma, and Travellers, who face their own unique challenges in the UK.

Critics assert that while the intention behind "global majority" is to emphasise solidarity among non-white groups—pointing out that 85 per cent of the world’s population is non-white—the term can inadvertently obscure the complexities of identity within the UK. The experience of a Black British person can starkly differ from that of someone from a Black-majority Caribbean nation or a Muslim in a predominantly white European country. Such divergence underscores that identity is deeply contextual, rooted in geography, class, and history.

The longstanding reliance on terms like "ethnic minority" reflects a reality where, with white British people making up approximately three-quarters of the population, the concept of ethnicity is often situated within this demographic framework. Thus, while terms evolve, many British people, including ethnic minorities, still resonate more with established labels that provide clarity rather than new terms that may seem abstract or expansive. Reports indicate that a majority of ethnic minorities prefer the term "ethnic minority" for its familiarity and straightforwardness, reiterating the importance of context in discussions about race and identity.

Debates surrounding terminology extend beyond mere semantics; they touch upon the essence of belonging and representation. The term "political Blackness," for example, historically served to unite various groups under a shared struggle against racism during the 1970s. However, societal progress has led many to embrace their specific ethnic identities, which can sometimes lead to tension within the broader narrative framed by terms like "global majority." Conversely, the contemporary anti-racism movement, highlighted by the Black Lives Matter protests, has emphasised the need to foreground specific challenges faced by ethnic groups, advocating for a terminology that seeks to encapsulate rather than limit their experiences.

The introduction of "global majority" as a catch-all term, while well-intentioned, risks creating confusion and a dilution of individual identities. The term's application in projects such as the National Trust's "Walk Together Pathway," which has garnered criticism for its allegedly "woke" undertones, exemplifies the complexities involved. While the Trust defends its use of "global majority," asserting that it represents the groups involved, detractors argue that such shifts may merely amount to virtue signalling without effectively addressing the varied needs of the communities purportedly represented.

In advancing discussions about ethnicity and identity, it is crucial that the voices of those affected are not overshadowed by top-down initiatives. Effective change must come from an understanding of how individuals themselves prefer to identify, with a focus on creating inclusive dialogue that acknowledges the diverse tapestry of British society. This requires ongoing engagement with communities to ensure that terminology resonates and accurately reflects their experiences and aspirations.

As the conversation around terminology continues to evolve, the challenge remains: how can society foster a shared narrative that encapsulates the richness of its diversity while maintaining respect for individual identities? The task is not merely to scramble for more inclusive language but to engage in meaningful discussions that prioritise understanding and representation.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/global-majority-ethnic-minority-bame-racism-b2759828.html), [[4]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/05/17/national-trust-woke-row-ethnic-minority-global-majority/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[2]](https://www.ncvo.org.uk/news-and-insights/news-index/why-language-matters-in-building-belonging/), [[5]](https://www.civilsociety.co.uk/news/ncvo-adopts-term-global-majority-instead-of-bame-or-ethnic-minorities.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/76acdaa1-5b23-4495-a214-0716027e7007), [[6]](https://www.bfi.org.uk/inclusion-film-industry/preferred-terms-inclusive-language/our-preferred-terms-around-race)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://www.bfi.org.uk/inclusion-film-industry/preferred-terms-inclusive-language/our-preferred-terms-around-race), [[7]](https://www.thehrdirector.com/global-majority-well-meaning-demeaning/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/global-majority-ethnic-minority-bame-racism-b2759828.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/news-and-insights/news-index/why-language-matters-in-building-belonging/> - The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) has adopted the term 'global majority' to refer to all ethnic groups except white British and other white groups, including white minorities. This decision follows extensive consultation and aims to better reflect the diversity of its members. The term is intended to challenge existing white-centric narratives and reframe conversations from disadvantage to advantage. NCVO acknowledges that no single term can fully capture the complex experiences of Britain's diverse communities but believes this is a step towards more inclusive language.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/76acdaa1-5b23-4495-a214-0716027e7007> - An article in the Financial Times discusses the term 'global majority,' coined by Rosemary Campbell-Stephens, and its limitations. While intended to highlight that Black, Asian, mixed, and other ethnic groups form a global majority, the term excludes white ethnic minority groups, such as Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities, who face significant disparities in the UK. The article argues that while terms and labels shape perceptions, they must also accurately represent and include all groups needing support, suggesting that 'ethnic minority' is more inclusive.
4. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/05/17/national-trust-woke-row-ethnic-minority-global-majority/> - The National Trust has been criticised for replacing the term 'ethnic minority' with 'global majority' in its 'Walk Together Pathway' project. The move has prompted accusations of 'virtue-signalling' and led to claims of a 'woke agenda' at the conservation charity. The Trust defended its use of the term, stating it felt it was the 'most appropriate' language to describe the project, which trains new walk leaders representing ethnic minority groups. The term 'global majority' refers to non-white people, who make up about 85% of the global population.
5. <https://www.civilsociety.co.uk/news/ncvo-adopts-term-global-majority-instead-of-bame-or-ethnic-minorities.html> - The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) has adopted the term 'global majority' to refer to all ethnic groups except white British and other white groups, including white ethnic minorities. This decision follows extensive consultation with members, NCVO’s staff networks, and interest groups. The term includes people from Black, Asian, mixed, and other ethnic groups who are often called 'ethnic minorities.' NCVO acknowledges that the term isn't perfect but believes it better reflects reality and supports reframing conversations from disadvantage to advantage.
6. <https://www.bfi.org.uk/inclusion-film-industry/preferred-terms-inclusive-language/our-preferred-terms-around-race> - The British Film Institute (BFI) encourages the use of specific language when referring to people's ethnicity, preferring terms that define racialised minoritised populations in their own terms, not in reference to whiteness. When grouping experiences and communities together, such as in data collection, the BFI uses the term 'Black and Global Majority,' as it encompasses shared experiences without marginalisation. The term 'Global Majority' refers to people who are Black, African, Asian, Brown, dual-heritage, indigenous to the global south, and/or have been racialised as 'ethnic minorities.'
7. <https://www.thehrdirector.com/global-majority-well-meaning-demeaning/> - An article in The HR Director examines the term 'global majority' and its implications. The term is used to show a difference from all white people, as white people tend to dominate in terms of numbers and influence within organisations. The article argues that using terms such as 'majority' and 'minority' carries unfortunate connotations, suggesting that the former is more dominant and important, and the latter lesser in importance and worth. The term 'Global Majority' is intended to highlight that non-white collective accounts for approximately 85% of the global population.