

METRO Charity Race Audit

Emerging Findings Interim Report

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1. Introduction

1.1 METRO Charity's (METRO) vision is: *'For a world where diversity is celebrated, difference respected and valued, and where optimum health and wellbeing for all is a collective goal'*.

1.2 Like many organisations, conversations about racism at METRO gathered momentum as part of the global Black Lives Matter movement that exploded after the killing of George Floyd. In May 2020, staff self-organised to raise the issue of racism and anti-racism at METRO and the Race Equality Action Group (REAG) was formed. Since that time over two years ago, the organisation has been on an anti-racism journey that, for many staff of colour, has been a disappointing and painful experience.

1.3 JEDI Consultancy was awarded the METRO race equality training contract at the end of March 2022. A comprehensive context for the work was provided in the specification:

Metro Charity strongly believes it has a responsibility to ensure that all its staff, volunteers and service users are supported with equity and that any disparities based on race and ethnicity are eliminated... It is the aim of Metro Charity to ensure all staff and board members have a clear understanding of the dynamics of racism, how it plays out within the organisation, the work METRO carries out and in the role METRO takes on challenging racism at all levels of society.

METRO invitation to tender, December 2020

1.4 Given Metro's specific context as a historically White-led LGBTQ+ charity that merged with small, Black-led organisations to form a new identity, we felt a generic anti-racism training would not be effective.



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1.5 It felt important to create time and space to understand the unique context and needs of METRO staff, volunteers, and service users and to design a bespoke programme of training and support. We aimed to particularly understand the experiences of racially minoritised people at every level in the organisation.

1.6 JEDI Consultancy proposed to deliver the work across three phases of work: Discovery; Strategy; and Learning.

1.7 In the 'Discovery' phase of work, our objectives were to:

- a. Gain understanding of what has worked well over the course of METRO's anti-racist journey;
- b. Gain understanding of where there may be gaps in skills, knowledge and confidence;
- c. Develop a sense of the emotional landscape of the organisation;
- d. Foster a culture of openness and honesty around anti-racism work.

1.8 This report summarises the interim findings from the first part of our proposed work, the 'Discovery' phase. We have deliberately limited our commentary so that the voices of staff and trustees at METRO are heard.

A note on process

1.9 As an equalities-focused organisation, anti-racist work is a necessary part of the work for METRO. This type of work is also deeply challenging, as it requires honest reflection about where racism is showing up both in the organisation and in the individuals that make up the organisation.

1.10 The contents of this Report are likely to provoke emotionally charged conversations across the organisation. It is therefore important that careful



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consideration is given to ‘how and when’ the report is shared with different groups within METRO.

1.11 JEDI Consultancy commend METRO on their brave commitment to this work.

We encourage the leadership of METRO to be at the forefront of the on-going anti-racism change process. This includes the ongoing care and commitment that your staff, volunteers and service users will need to integrate this necessary work.

1.12 This phase of anti-racist work at METRO, began over two years ago. It is clear to us that mistakes have been made throughout this process leading to significant harm in both interpersonal relationships and organisational culture.

1.13 It is critical to be mindful of this at all the ongoing stages of reflection and planning work to ensure there is space for repair and the possibility of generative transformation.

1.14 During the discovery phase, Foundation Level anti-racism sessions have either been held or are scheduled, with the Senior Leadership team (SLT), the Board and members of the management team.

1.15 This report does not include the reflections and learning from these sessions due to the confidential nature of the staff and trustee reflections shared in the sessions.

A note on terminology

1.16 Throughout this report, we are using the terms ‘people of colour’ and ‘racially minoritised’ interchangeably to refer to all people at risk of harm from racism. We are explicitly inclusive of dual and multiple heritage people. Race is a social construct and the process of racialisation an inherently violent one. The language we use around race is therefore imperfect and can be experienced as violence. We will



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continue to support METRO in the process of finding appropriate language to use around racism that most resonates for those harmed by racism in the charity.

2. Methodology

2.1 The discovery phase had three core components:

- a. **Survey.** Throughout May and June 2022 an online survey was completed by 60 members of staff and trustees. Of these 60, 32 identified as White, 17 preferred not to state their ethnicity and 11 respondents identified as people of colour. We are grateful to all staff and trustees who took the time to complete this survey.
- b. **Interviews and focus groups.** Interviews were offered to a range of people across the organisation. Four individual interviews were conducted with two members of SLT, one member of staff and one trustee. Two focus groups were held, one for SLT and one for racialised staff members. A total of fourteen people participated in the interviews and focus groups of whom six identified as people of colour.
- c. **Desk-based review.** The following documents were requested:
 - Strategy papers, business plan;
 - Mission and values;
 - Relevant policies;
 - Data on disciplinaries and complaints over last 5 years;
 - Staffing demographics from 5 years ago and now;
 - Any relevant documents from constituent organisations prior to mergers;



- UHURU or REAG documents that are relevant and shareable.

2.2 Alongside publicly available information on the internet, seven policies were reviewed, thirteen separate documents relating to constituent organisations, six separate documents and several email correspondences relating to REAG and Uhuru, and further data relating to disciplinaries, complaints and demographics. The desk-based review is part of our background research and our recommendations in relation to these are not included within this Report.

3. Survey findings

3.1 The survey findings make for sober reading and repeatedly indicate a ‘tale of two METROs’ with White respondents and respondents of colour having markedly different experiences in the same organisation.

3.2 White respondents consistently reported feeling valued, supported and understood at work. They hold positive feelings about their professional lives. In contrast, respondents of colour reported feeling distrusted and unsupported to progress (by management and SLT), alongside frequently witnessing/experiencing racism. They did not believe that METRO would respond effectively if and when issues were raised.

3.3 Despite over 50% of all respondents reporting having witnessed or experienced racism at METRO, over half of the White respondents stated they had never reported any racist incidents at work and were less able to share examples of racism at work.



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3.4 In completing this survey, respondents of colour can respond from their own experiences at METRO. In contrast, White respondents are being asked to share their perception of how equitable the organisation is through the lens of race. The lens through which the respondents recognise these problems is therefore materially different.

3.5 The survey data further reveals that White staff and trustees are consistently failing to recognise the different forms of racism, as they play out at Metro.

3.6 Staff and trustees of colour are therefore left, not only to navigate the various levels and forms of racism they inevitably encounter at METRO, but also having to face the denial and knowledge gaps of many of their colleagues.

Limitations

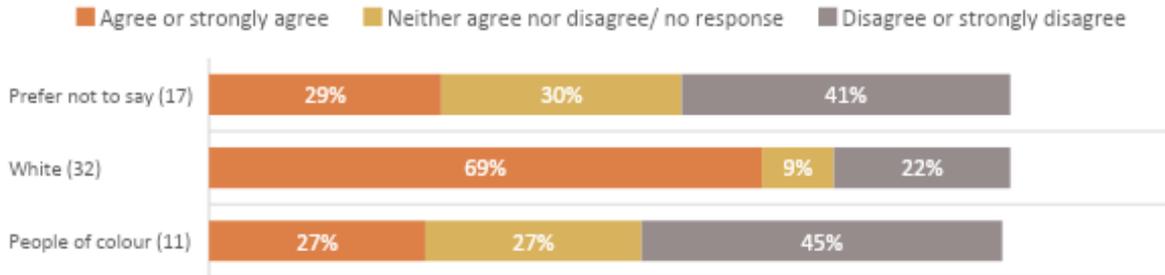
3.7 Although the overall response rate was high (63%), the data relating to eight identity fields was incomplete. There were four identity fields where relatively complete datasets were available (age, disability, privileged upbringing, and caring responsibilities).

3.8 For the remaining eight identity fields, 30-40% of respondents did not provide information (prefer not to say, not sure or no response). This made disaggregation complex and, in some areas, impossible due to the incomplete data sets. Based on the incomplete demographic data, we cannot determine comprehensively to what extent the respondent group is reflective of the overall staff team. The large sample does give us some confidence in the reliability of the findings.

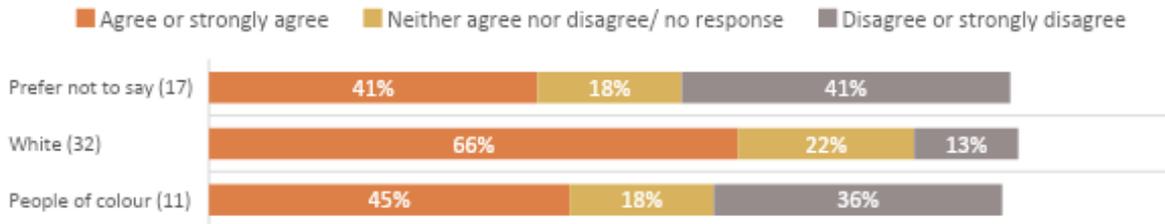
3.9 We set out the survey findings below.



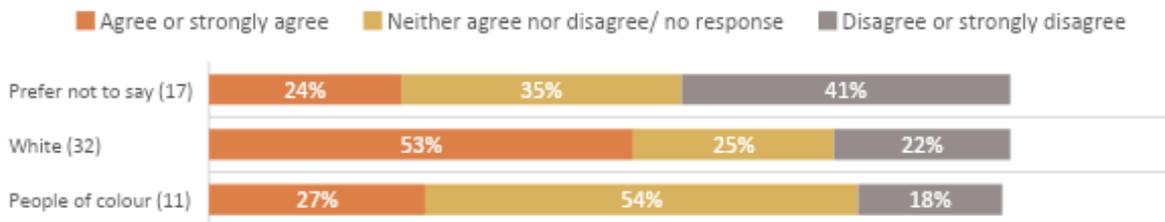
1. Racialised staff and volunteers are valued team members at METRO.



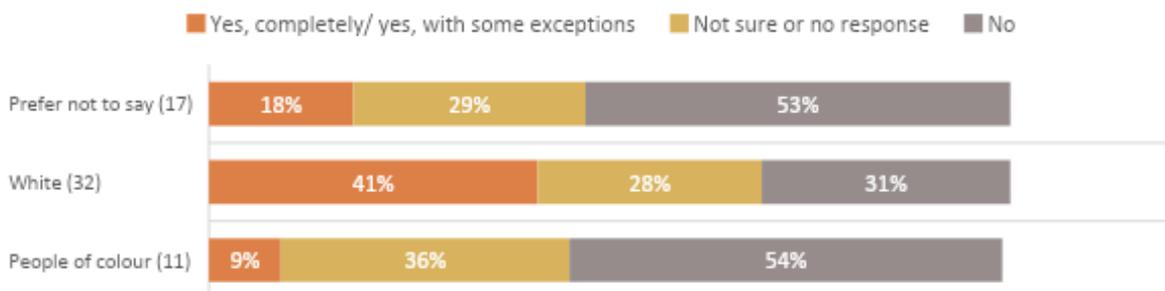
2. Racialised staff and volunteers have equitable access to training and development opportunities at METRO.



3. Racialised staff and volunteers at METRO have comparable workloads in relation to their White peers.



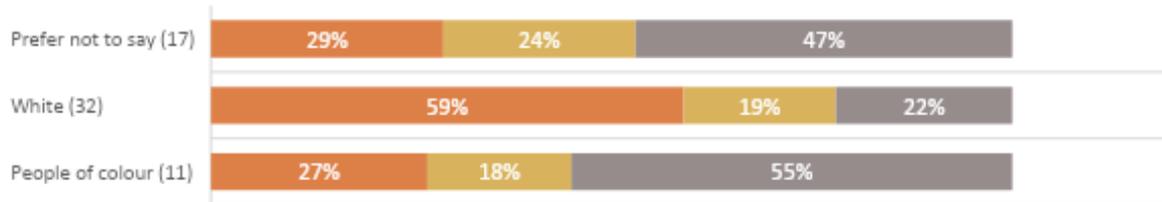
4. Opportunities offered for career and learning progression and the process by which people are promoted at METRO is equitable for Racialised and White people.





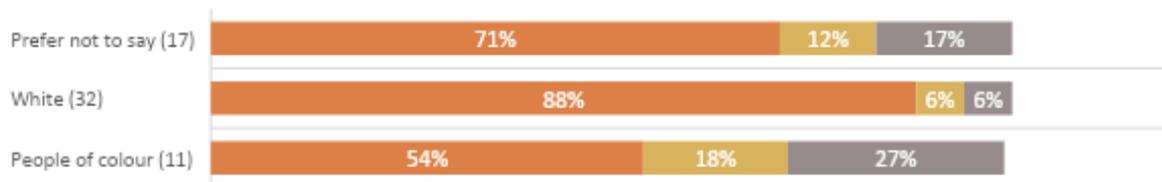
5. I am regularly asked to contribute to the decision-making processes at METRO.

Agree or strongly agree Neither agree nor disagree/ no response Disagree or strongly disagree



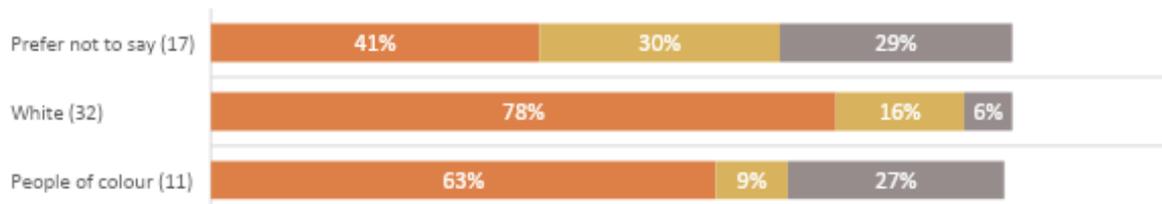
6. I feel trusted by my line manager to do my job

Agree or strongly agree Neither agree nor disagree/ no response Disagree or strongly disagree



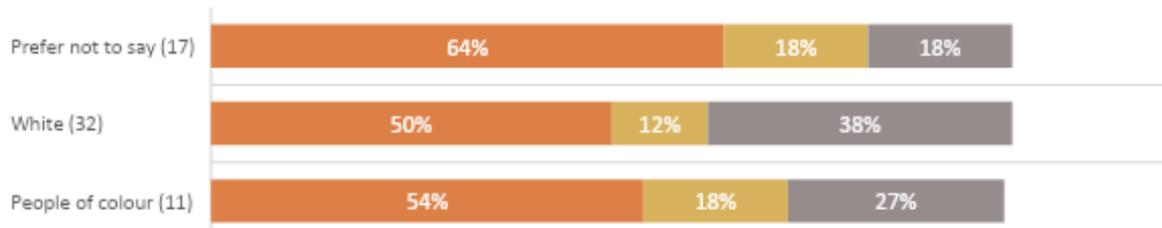
7. I feel trusted by the SLT to do my job

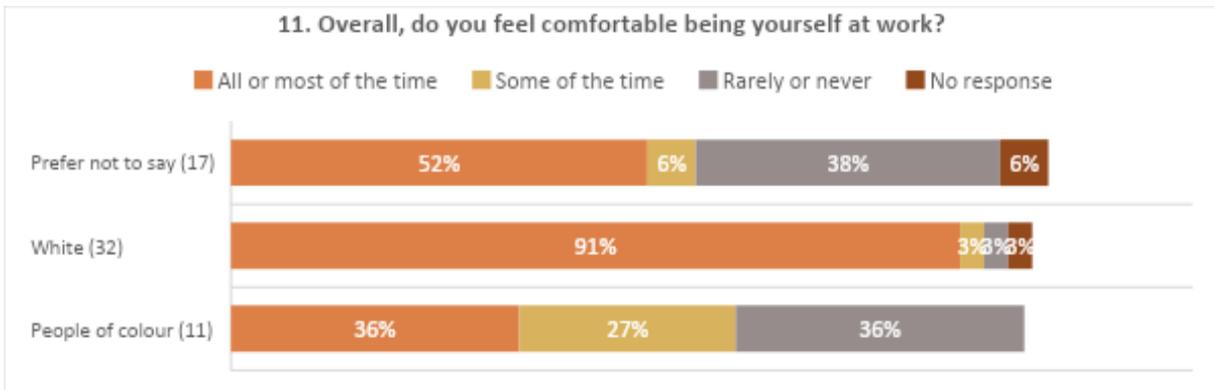
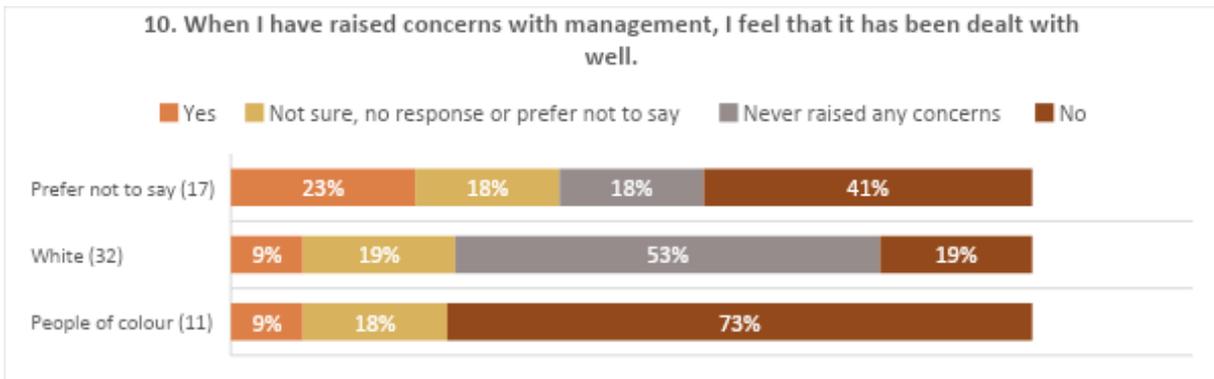
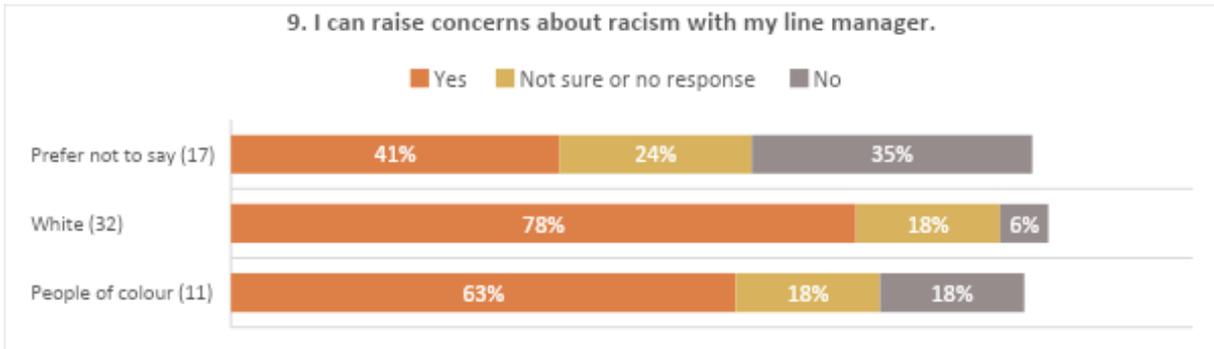
Agree or strongly agree Neither agree nor disagree/ no response Disagree or strongly disagree

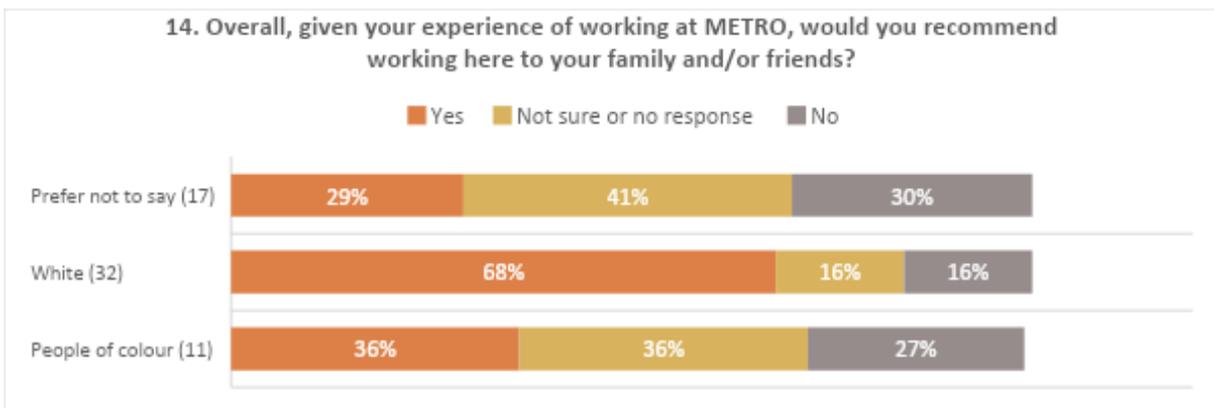
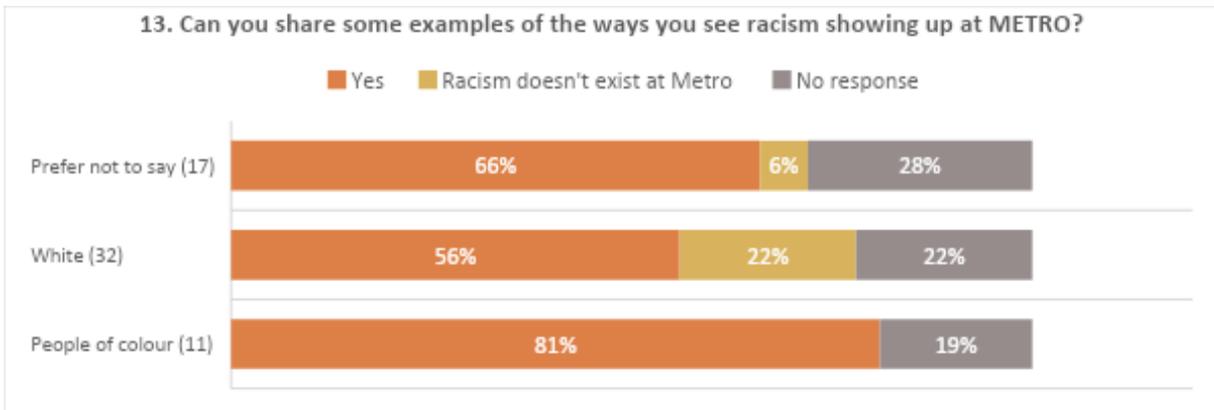
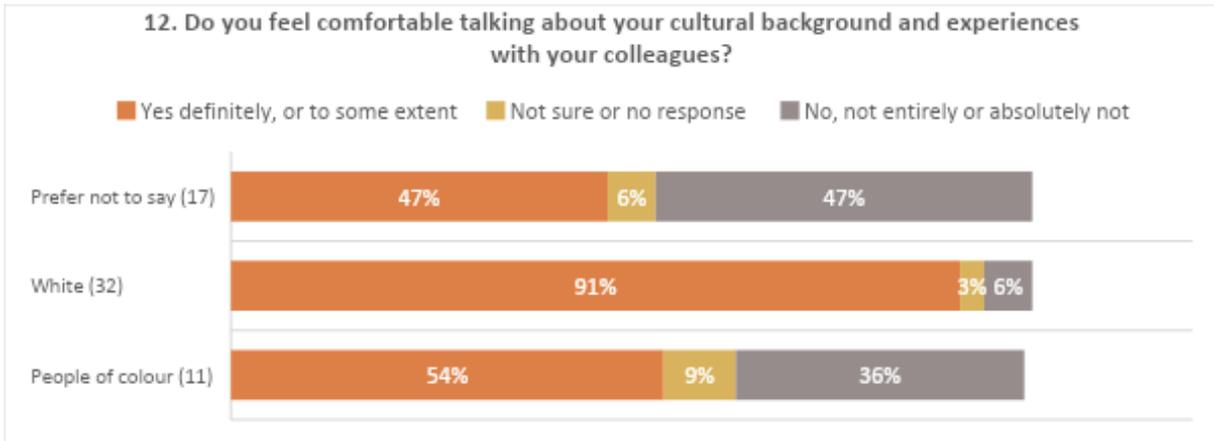


8. During my employment at METRO, I have heard/witnessed/experienced racism.

Yes, often, just once or more than once Not sure or no response Never







Further Questions

3.10 The survey results raised more questions for us. As part of an ongoing process, we would like to further interrogate the survey data and enter into further dialogue



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with different members of the organisation: e.g. staff; volunteers; trustees and leaders (through focus groups and further interviews). The questions would include:

- a. What are your initial thoughts on what the survey results reveal about the organisation?
- b. What are your initial thoughts on priority areas for action?
- c. Why might so many Metro Charity staff prefer not to state their ethnicity or other protected and unprotected characteristics?
- d. What do these markedly different responses from white staff and staff of colour tell us about racism at Metro

4. Emerging themes

4.1 Qualitative data from the survey responses, interviews and focus groups was collated and a thematic analysis was undertaken. Ten emerging themes were found as summarised below. The italicised comments below are all quotes from respondents, with some minor changes to ensure anonymity.



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- A. Discrimination in pay, job security, workloads, development and progression
- B. 'Normalisation' of racisms
- C. Lack of representation
- D. Lack of leadership
- E. Singular equality focus and distorted organisational identity
- F. White fragility and denial
- G. De-valuing anti-racist work
- H. Silencing of voices of people of colour
- I. Performative anti-racism
- J. Organisational culture characterised by punitive response, exclusion and bullying

A. Discrimination in pay, job security, workloads, development, and progression

4.2 By far the most resonant theme (theme frequency more than double next most recurrent theme), respondents identified significant race disparities in pay, job security, workloads, development, and progression and many gave examples:

'I feel my progress has been hindered because of race';

'When my manager is busy, I am overloaded with additional work and have many things passed on to me, however when my manager is not busy, he is very quick to micromanage me, despite leaving me with no support for large chunks of time';

'Ask a few questions and you will discover that Black/Brown people are never advanced at METRO. We dominate the lower ranks of the organisation and many of



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us have crashed into the glass ceiling and remained stagnant at the same level for years. Growth for non-White and non-LGBT people at METRO remains an unattainable dream’;

‘BME staff experience a higher workload for less pay together with close monitoring’;

‘In my years at METRO there have been very few direct hires of racialised staff, and even fewer into management positions’.

4.3 One White colleague reflected on their own racial privilege and the advantage this has afforded them at METRO:

‘I have been at METRO for several years but feel certain that my being white has benefitted my continued work here’.

B. Normalisation of racisms

4.4 Respondents shared many clear examples of racism at every level (interpersonal, cultural, institutional) including microaggressions, employment-related discriminations (outlined above), unequitable resource allocations, stereotyping and assumptions, and exclusion.

4.5 Disturbing for the auditors was the ‘normalisation’ of all types of racism by many White respondents. Whilst some of these respondents recognised a lack of representation; a lack of trust and a compromised sense of belonging experienced by colleagues of colour, overall, these colleagues did not express high levels of concern or distress about racism in the organisation. This was also reflected in the leadership of METRO:



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'Generally, people are not sure why this consultation is taking place but welcome it. Rumours and hearsay from the past are unhelpful';

'I think every member of staff is guilty of inappropriate language at some point. I have never witnessed any blatant racism';

'Discrimination against & stereotypical attitudes are commonplace against members of staff that are not White';

'[as a white staff member] ...it is my overall observation that my POC colleagues do not feel valued at part of this organisation, and more often feel compromised, tokenised, and silenced by organisational practices';

'I have heard about many incidents that racialised staff have faced. There have also been other incidents where I have had to challenge other white staff on their choice of language and the way they interact with racialised colleagues ('where are you from?' etc.);

4.6 Conversely many staff of colour were able to share more examples about the types of racisms, deeper concerns about the nature of racisms and expressed high levels of distress, frustration, despair and hopelessness over the prevalence of racism at METRO:

'I have seen first-hand metros 'racist' behaviour towards staff. This is not an anti-racist charity';

'METRO has a problem with structural racism- whether conscious or unconscious, there's a definite racial bias at the charity';

'[There is the constant] assumption that [staff of colour] don't know what they are doing';



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'Unconscious bias from staff/ White members of staff making comments about how they aren't racist but being dismissive or making thoughtless comments';

'Staff members doubting the abilities and competencies of racialised staff';

'Microaggressions are common, like people saying my name wrong. Or comments about world music';

'Discrimination against BME people at METRO is the norm';

'BME stereotypes are used by staff with a lack of awareness of it and its impact';

'I have seen racism through comments made to me and others regarding personality, and subtle comments with regards to the colour of skin';

'Most of us understand that METRO is not for us so raising these issues is a pointless venture';

*'Lack of specific mentoring for racialised staff, comments and inappropriate touching (like of hair), having a Samba band for Pride without a meaningful discussion about appropriation, use of 'diverse' comms visuals that tick a box but have little substance behind them, the same racialised staff being called on to complete tasks so there is diversity but little awareness or support available for their mental health or the toll it might take on them. At times it felt a bit like racialised staff are spoken down to, I have seen Black women alter their behaviour as they are treated like "angry Black woman"'.
"*

4.7 The majority of examples of racism experienced/ witnessed at METRO were specifically anti-Black, with some respondents reflecting also on the intersection of race and gender in how racism is experienced:



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'I am always being told Black women are dramatic, people saying they are scared of me, the whole 'angry Black woman' thing ...';

'[Black staff are repeatedly] told they should work more like their [White] colleagues. There is no awareness of the impact of this';

'METRO charity has and always will be against Black staff as White people think they have more control and more possibility of going up the ladder if they label Black staff 'aggressive' and White people then say they feel 'unsafe' to continue conversations';

'I've seen White people touching Black peoples' hair multiple times... Assertions from a colleague that another colleague is "on the game" i.e. a sex-worker (not overtly racism, but felt to be racially coded) ... Someone saying "I think gay people have it worse than Black people".'

d.

C. Lack of representation

4.8 Most respondents noted the lack of representation at senior leadership level, with many also noting an imbalance across the organisation, particularly in services which are predominately utilised by people of colour:

'METRO is "stale, pale and male"';

'The organisational chart paints an ugly but true picture of the situation at METRO'

'There is an overwhelmingly White staff group at all levels of the organisation';

'Long standing POC staff members were originally affiliated with smaller charities that METRO took over, therefore not direct hires by METRO';



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'I believe we should have a leadership team representative of the wider workforce and the service users that we represent';

'Structurally SLT & SMT have been very White, and recruitment practices fail to affirmatively address this. 'We encourage applicants from minority groups' is not enough. It was unsurprising that the new CEO appointment was another White man, yet the reason given was the 'small pool of applicants';

4.9 One respondent made the clear connection also between lack of representation and additional unpaid labour:

'Due to being a minority within the organisation, and with very few senior staff members being POC, it is my impression that POC staff at METRO carry a disproportionate amount of labour for the organisation, particularly in regard to wider conversations around difference and anti-racism. This extends to supporting POC service users, who benefit from work with a POC staff member. While some of this work might be remunerated, it is not sufficiently so, creating an imbalance of labour distribution.

D. Lack of leadership

4.10 Anti-racism work requires clear, humble, committed, accountable and informed leadership and many respondents felt this to be lacking:

'I feel that SLT does not place enough emphasis on acknowledging that staff or even they themselves are going to make these mistakes, and publicly calling out the charity itself for past problematic ways that racism has been treated';

'There has been very slow action in terms of making any actual meaningful progress or change to the culture';



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'Excessive scrutiny, discriminatory attitudes, a suspicious manner is how I feel SLT view non-White people';

'Discussions of power and privilege have historically been silenced by SLT and there have been negative consequences for staff who strive to address these issues';

'There is a cockiness that comes from SLT that makes me feel [my input into decision making] would be received but then immediately dismissed as soon as I was out of earshot' .

4.11 There has been significant damage to the relationship between SLT, management and many staff of colour over the last two years. The lack of trust has been exacerbated by direct experiences of racism by staff of colour from some White members of SLT and the wider management team:

'Disparity in pay, selective allocation of resources, discriminatory policies, snide racist remarks, I have seen and heard it all from SLT';

'We don't trust METRO. When having meetings about BLM – they give with one hand and at the same time try to force the most abusive person into our safe space. It doesn't make sense. SLT do see it – and still do it';

'SLT are only good at looking after themselves and their own concerns. Take the staff salary review as a prime example. All SLT salaries have been approved and receive uplifts - managers and staff have been waiting years. SLT pretend to listen and fake their interest, but do not act in the interests of anyone below them';

'[Examples of racism include:] A manager talking over racialised staff, being dismissive of and speaking to their experiences. A manager expecting racialised staff to educate them and the team. A defensive or almost aggressive response when issues have tried to be brought up. A culture of reticence to raise issues';



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'[People of colour] don't trust the charity. The SLT needs to build bridges around this. We are doing well. They need to wake up not us';

'[Examples of racism include]: Microaggressions and racial stereotyping e.g. some SLT members only telling racialised staff about previous partners who were minority ethnic and then using stereotypes to discuss it with them: "my partner was Black and it's true what they say about Black families..." Neglecting to tell Black managers information about the people they manage and telling White managers who don't manage them directly'.

4.12 Respondents also made a direct link between the lack of representation in leadership roles and the lack of effective leadership around anti-racist work, with some highlighting the impact this has on service users:

'The whiteness of staff recruitment impacts on who accesses our services, replicating power imbalances between service provider and user, yet the SLT are not recognising or addressing this. SMT/SLT are not addressing barriers to accessing services such as travel reimbursement for asylum seekers who are predominantly racialised';

'There is a lack of role models due to White SLT';

'We need a mixture of voices in decision making to listen to us and take some of what we say on. And not just dismiss us because we are not at the same level. SLT is all White and [anti-racism work at METRO] feels hopeless when I see them';

4.13 It is critical that staff are listened to on this important theme of leadership; that attention is paid to restoration and repair, as well as to building knowledge, systems and processes that ensure that previous mistakes are not made again. As one respondent noted:



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'[SLT] must have known what was going on. So, they have to live with the legacy'.

E. Singular focus of METRO and distorted organisational identity

4.14 Many respondents feel that METRO is unable to hold an intersectional ethos and the focus remains singular:

'Difference is not celebrated unless it relates to gender and sexuality';

'I feel my queerness is supported, but I do still feel like I experience a lot of misogyny and have been actively told not to criticise things too openly';

'METRO, as an entity, is designed for the advancement and enrichment of White and LGBT people. There is absolutely nothing wrong with this, however this position disadvantages and excludes non-White and non-LGBT people. The term "equality" therefore ceases to apply when it comes to METRO';

'This is not an equality charity around race';

'[METRO is] not seeing that race and diversity work as equal to the other work we do'.

4.15 While some respondents shared this as an observation, others felt more strongly that the title 'equalities charity' was inaccurate and that METRO has a distorted self-image:

'Feels shocking. At METRO, you expect there to be some kind of understanding about EDI. But I feel shocked that there is so much to do';



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'It's not an equality charity. The focus is on queerness but not race';

'There is very little awareness of race in the organisation. Sometimes comments have a bit of an 'all lives matter' flavour and this misses the point of the work we are trying to do. [METRO] does not recognise the particular and unique circumstances of race. It is painful'.

F. Denial of racism and White fragility

4.16 As mentioned above, the auditors found the ambivalence of some White respondents towards the experiences of their colleagues disturbing. More alarming was the outright denial of racism by some White respondents including some victim-blaming language (attributing racism to perceptions rather than reality) and allegations of 'reverse racism' (a manifestation of White supremacy):

'Like I mentioned above - racism can work both ways. I experienced it myself working in the company, where the majority of people were Black';

'Most [staff of colour] have less workloads than White colleagues';

'I believe people are stretched to capacity and dealing with a complaint can often be time-consuming and complex [as justification for racist incidents not being appropriately responded to]';

'[Responding to a question about equitable access to training:] All staff are within their rights to access training, however extra effort should be put in to engage staff who may be disillusioned by prior lack of support irrespective of their race';



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'I think there is a broader problem with how all staff are treated by the senior leadership. There are other structural issues which affect everyone that does make staff at METRO feel downtrodden [not just people of colour]';

'From my experience, sometimes racialised team members perceive they are not being promoted due to racism, but it has actually been down to other candidates having the skills and experience needed for the role. This is not to say that racism in wider society doesn't play a part in why racialised team members might not have these skills and experience, or that we couldn't do more to support staff to develop these skills and gain the experience';

4.17 Within this theme of denial, many respondents also noted the White fragility they have encountered when trying to raise issues of racism with White colleagues:

'It's not so much that they would shut it down, but I don't feel they would take it seriously or acknowledge their responsibility in being inappropriate';

'Very difficult conversations were had, it was like opening a lid. Lots of dry personal stuff and some really inflammatory stuff';

'Often White fragility comes into play. [People say things like] I am ...[a particular identity], so I can't be racist; I am in an inter-racial relationship, so I can't be racist; we have to look at these issues for everyone or all have some work to do';

4.18 Some White respondents were also able to share their own observations on White fragility:



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'White people are vulnerable when talking about race- they are blinded by their experiences';

'We're definitely not prepared to talk about race yet'.

4.19 The impact of this denial and fragility on people of colour was also shared:

'People read up around race. Then they think they are the experts over you. They feel they can speak on race. Crossing a line between being an ally and taking away my voice. You can read all you want but you still don't know what it is like to be Black';

'Sometimes our suggestions are met with defensiveness and comments about [White staff members high levels of] cultural competence and professionalism. It's hard to challenge White staff when you like them, but they just don't get it'.

G. Devaluing anti-racist work

4.20 This theme highlights the structural racism inherent in anti-racist work being seen as 'optional' and therefore unfunded. Together with the emotional labour and time of staff of colour being extractive:

'[There is disparity in] pay - especially when it comes to the emotional labour of trying to implement race equality plans at METRO - they're always told they don't need to be paid because it's their own time and their own interest';

'[SLT are] expecting staff to do anti-racist work within the charity unpaid, or on top of our existing heavy workloads';



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'We have struggled to get our race work funded – There is no recognition of our emotional labour and our mental health. The time we have spent in UHURU and REAG. If this was work around mental health – they would have funded it. We did the work for free. We got two hours a month to do race equality work. We went much further than this with our time. When we tried to claim this – we were made to feel like we are taking advantage';

We want to be part of the ongoing process. If it's an equal space, then yes. If it's just us doing the work and carrying the burden then I am out. I want to be in the space with them and see the work moved forward';

'METRO often sends out questionnaires and information-gathering surveys. However, this practice is extractive, in that the work of junior and low staff members such as myself is not remunerated and is additional to our own work'.

4.21 This theme also brings to the surface some of the wounding that has happened because of the flawed approaches to anti-racism over the last two years at METRO:

'Using racialised employees time and energy to action things on the REAP but without remuneration or recognition of the emotional labour required for this work';

'White workers have often dominated conversations about race and equality but also have shown largely a lack of sensitivity or awareness as to how their actions impact racialised workers. The support group organised for racialised staff is unable to keep running as the charity refuse to financially support the staff who set it up and they were expected to do this work for free';

'We have tried but we are not listened to - so I am done! I can't do this anymore, I am just done! People don't want to do anything for METRO anymore. METRO has shown us who they really are as a charity. . They are not going to change. What's the



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point of trying? We have worked so hard to get to this moment of trust. They have taken advantage for far too long. It feels insulting. They know it – they organise events - like away days. – there is poor attendance. – because we think why bother? So, they can take a picture of us all and show they are so diverse – for black pride etc’;

‘Those who have attempted to support the charity in addressing racial issues have ended up resigning out of frustration, disappointment and concern for their jobs - some have stopped working at the charity under unclear circumstances’.

H. Silencing voices of people of colour

4.22 Respondents of colour frequently reported feeling silenced around issues of racism and diversity, or when they did speak out, feeling ignored or dismissed:

‘SLT are not listening to information passed on from REAG/ racialised staff about what would be helpful/ needed’;

‘When there are opportunities that are billed as shared decision making, it is regularly made clear that decisions have already been made and this is simply an exercise to say that they listened’;

‘Racialised members of staff feeling unable to call out racism’;

‘Questions often get ignored or dealt with verbally. Question that are answered verbally, leave no paper trail’;



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'When we build something up. Put our effort and heart into it. They don't support us to take the senior role around it. They gave it to someone else. They don't choose the right person for the task';

'Our opinions and thoughts shared are often not taken on board and minimised';

'Communications team is setting the tone but they don't listen when spoken to about things. So they were told not to use certain words about HIV at an event or on the fliers, because it would disclose the HIV status of service users to family members he did not know and they ignored this. The experience of HIV for a Black African mother is very different to a White gay man for example. When Black women are telling you 'don't do this', they ignore it and it jeopardises so many people... When we say to them afterwards, 'you blew up someone's life' they then minimise this';

'Although asked [to contribute to decision making], I often feel like it is a wasted exercise as my opinion might be heard and noted, but it is still then ignored. When staff are involved in decision making, it often feels like a tick box exercise of doing something'

4.23 Contrastingly, some White respondents claimed they were not aware of any racism in the organisation due to a lack of 'evidence'. This is sometimes referred to as the 'no data excuse' and is a form of structural racism that requires people of colour to evidence their experiences of racism while simultaneously dismissing or negating all the evidence that is produced:

'I don't know what staff perception is [of racism in the organisation]. They [staff of colour] don't talk to me';



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'I think I would need more evidence about this to comment accurately'.

I. Performative anti-racism

4.24 Many respondents noted the performativity of anti-racist work at METRO, expressing disappointment and fatigue as well as feelings of extraction or exploitation:

'Tokenism - as a diversity charity, I have seen non-genuine attempts to ensure Black and Brown folk are pushed to the front like a display piece';

'Being myself is out of the question because "myself" is not who METRO stands for. And then "Myself" is good enough when it comes to bringing in the funds';

'I feel we are being used as tick box exercise to show diversity';

'When it's time for pictures we will all be called out as they want a Black face in pictures, and we are pushed to front to show the diversity';

'METRO's effort at demonstrating diversity and inclusivity come across as tick-boxing/cosmetic exercises, rather than a genuine drive to tackle racial discrimination at work'.

J. Organisational culture of punitive response, exclusion, and bullying

4.25 Respondents shared concerns about the organisational culture at METRO not being conducive to anti-racism work, sharing examples of how staff of colour felt unable to raise issues due to a fear of punitive treatment, exclusion and bullying:



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'[There is a] culture of fear and discrimination voiced by my POC colleagues';

'Our team was almost exclusively White and led by a manager with little understanding of power and privilege - these were not topics we could discuss openly due to fear of repercussions as experienced by those who spoke up in the past';

'Staff who raise complaints about race have faced recriminations'.

4.26 Some comments have been made about a punitive organisational culture:

'There was a lot of retribution for discussing racial inequality at METRO';

'I feel that people might have been afraid to discuss some of the trauma that had potentially been experienced at the hands of the charity;

'When I noticed some problematic and anti-Black language being used ... I tried to raise it and challenge him but was very quickly shut down and felt hugely intimidated';

'When I previously raised concerns of tokenism my manager told me I needed to be cautious of how I spoke about SLT and who heard me criticising them. I feel scared to use my voice';

'Full staff meetings are increasingly allowing people to speak up, however there is still a fear of saying something that might offend, for example our ... SLT';

4.27 Within the context of racism at METRO, some general comments were made about the broader organisational culture:



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'Working at METRO is described by many of us as being in a toxic and abusive relationship. Look at the reviews on Google, particularly on Glassdoor. That review has been shared with many non-White staff who all agree that it's accurate to describe METRO as a "White boys" playground';

'SLT and SMT have no connection to frontline staff and do not recognise the huge impact the current financial crisis is having on workers. The refusal to provide cost of living wage rises, whilst creating further new roles out of core funding, sits very uncomfortably and is impacting morale on a huge scale'.

5. Next steps

- 5.1 The audit has brought a lot of issues to the surface and the investment of time and emotional labour that staff have made in this process must be respected, with a clear plan for next steps.
- 5.2 We recognise that we are not the best experts of what is needed in METRO. That expertise is held at all the different levels of the organisation. It is important to create the spaces for that expertise to be recognised; to flourish and to plan for the next stages of the work.
- 5.3 We recommend a series of follow up workshops and discussion spaces are held with staff, volunteers, leadership and trustees both to further conversations about race and racism at METRO and to ensure that our analysis and recommendations moving forward are as well informed, relevant and as accurate as possible.



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5.4 We recommend that this report is shared within METRO. Creating the above spaces will allow for the findings to be integrated.

5.5 Through the follow up workshops and interviews, we will support METRO Charity to develop greater racial literacy and develop a clear strategy to address the issues raised through the discovery phase.

5.6 This strategy, alongside our commentary and a clear set of recommendations, will be incorporated into a full audit report at the completion of the next phase of work. Alongside this process, a bespoke training package will continue being rolled out to the different levels of staff, volunteers and trustees in the organisation.

5.7 We recommend that for the staff level, this training package is rolled out initially by separating the White staff members from staff of colour. This allows for deeper work without the fear of causing or experiencing further significant harm. It may be that the work with those higher up in the organisation can be in mixed groups.

5.8 There will also be a need for the development of policies and processes to ensure that there are better safeguards and better opportunities for all in the organisation to minimise further harms and create further repair.

5.9 We thank METRO for the courage shown in undertaking this work. We recognise that these journeys are challenging and deeply necessary.