



# England Swims

Headline findings

If using data from this presentation, please reference the source as:  
Swim England, England Swims survey, 2022

# England Swims

England Swims was a four week nationwide survey which aimed to discover the barriers preventing ethnically diverse communities from accessing water-based activity in a bid to make aquatics more accessible and inclusive.

The findings will be used to help shape the future of the sector and Swim England's next 10-year strategy, which will be the most ambitious in terms of increasing diversity in aquatics.

# Aims of the campaign

The aim of the campaign was to understand the barriers of 16+ non-members from all ethnically diverse communities – those outside our core audience.

This included both those:

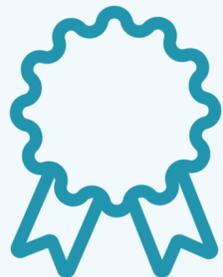
- Who can swim but choose not to
- Who cannot swim

Proactively target: South Asian, Black African, Black Caribbean and East Asian communities

Capture responses from: White, Mixed and Other community groups



# The headline results



**A total of 4,487**  
responses



**High sample of respondents from South Asian community**  
allowing us to analyse Indian and Pakistani communities separately, adding more depth to the findings



**High sample of respondents from Muslim community**  
allowing us to conduct specific analysis of the perceptions and barriers to swimming of this faith community



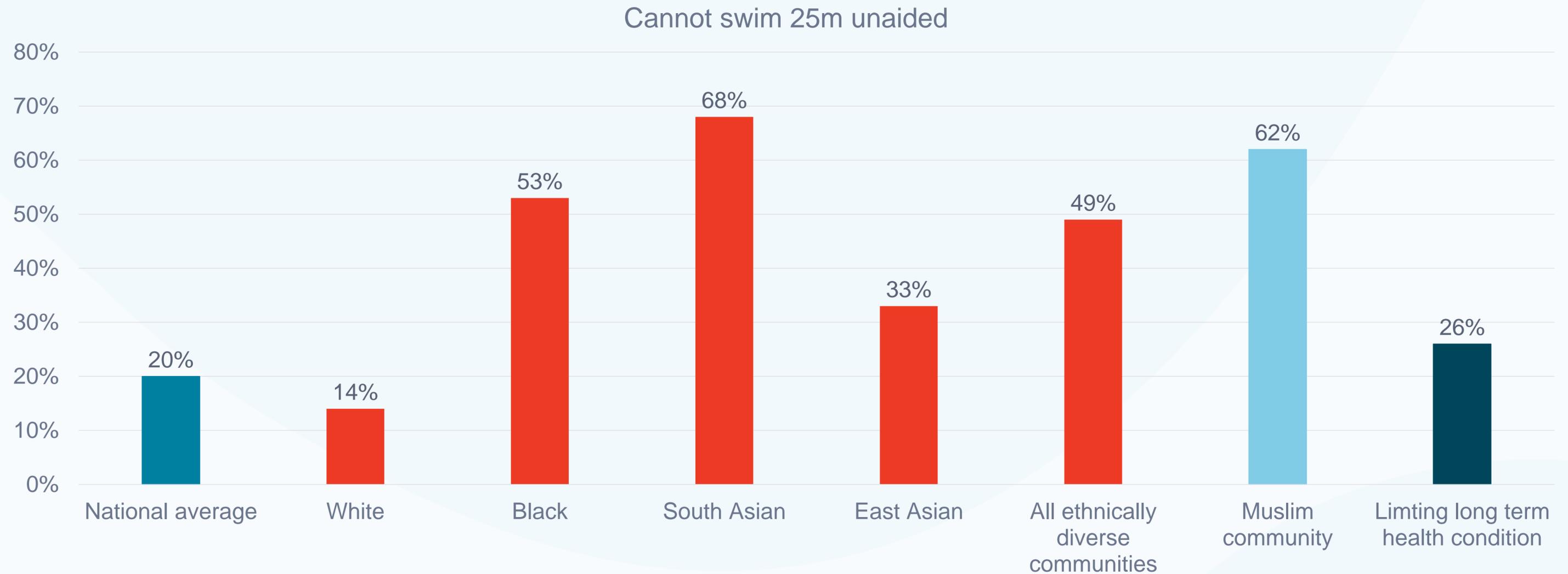
**736 respondents with long term health condition which has a substantial impact on their daily life**  
analysis of this cohort will support our health agenda



# Key findings

Insight

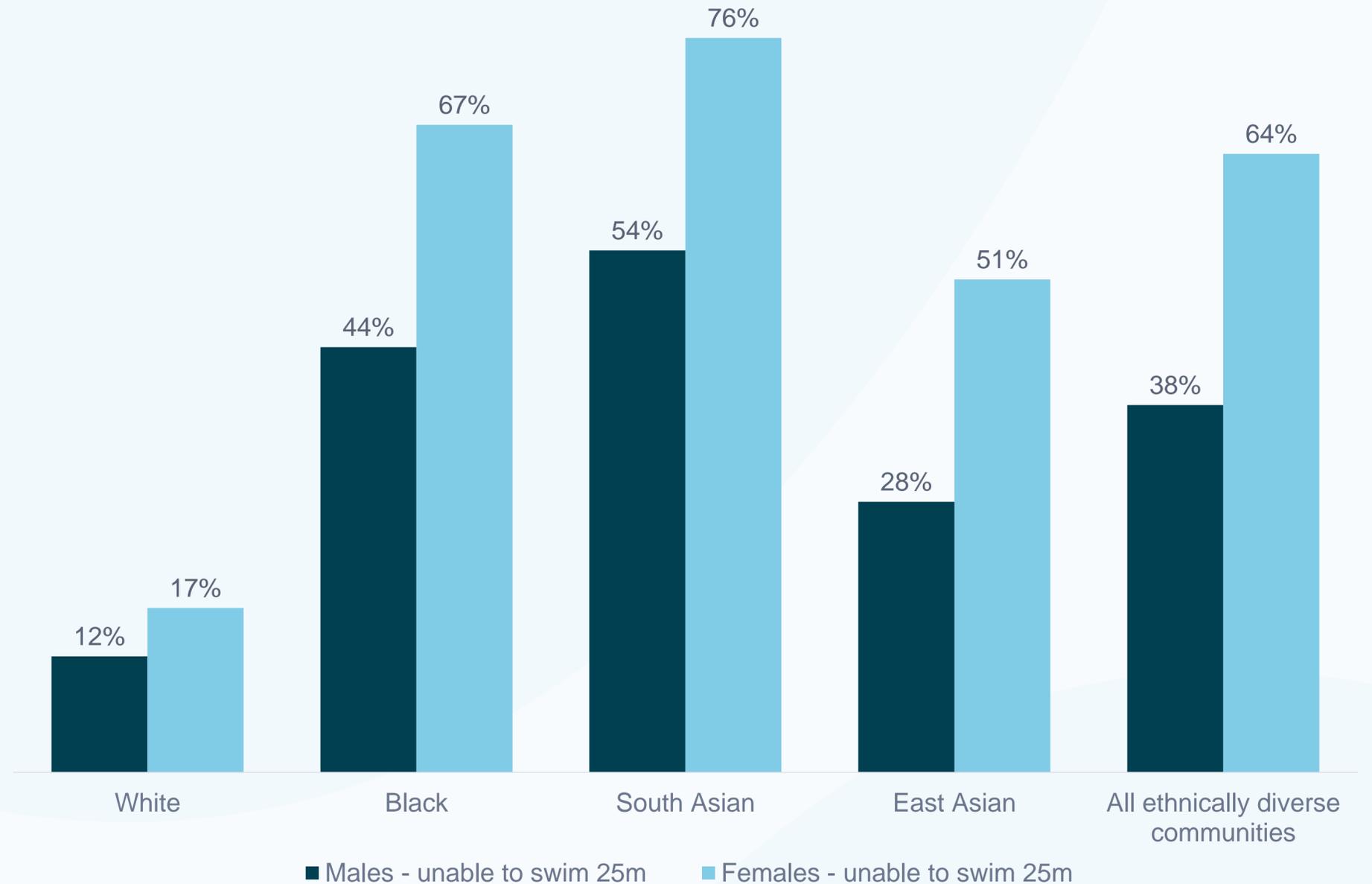
**There is a clear disparity of swimming abilities when analysing by ethnicity. 14% of White Communities cannot swim 25m, in comparison to 49% of ethnically diverse communities.**



## This disparity is further exemplified by gender differences. Females of all ethnicities are less likely to be able to swim 25m.

	Males unable to swim 25m	Females unable to swim 25m
White	<b>12%</b> 2,273,778	<b>17%</b> 3,426,385
Black	<b>44%</b> 286,168	<b>67%</b> 468,274
South Asian	<b>54%</b> 490,274	<b>76%</b> 1,060,592
East Asian	<b>28%</b> 65,447	<b>51%</b> 49,085
All ethnically diverse communities	<b>38%</b> 1,079,968	<b>64%</b> 1,805,706

Cannot swim 25m unaided by gender

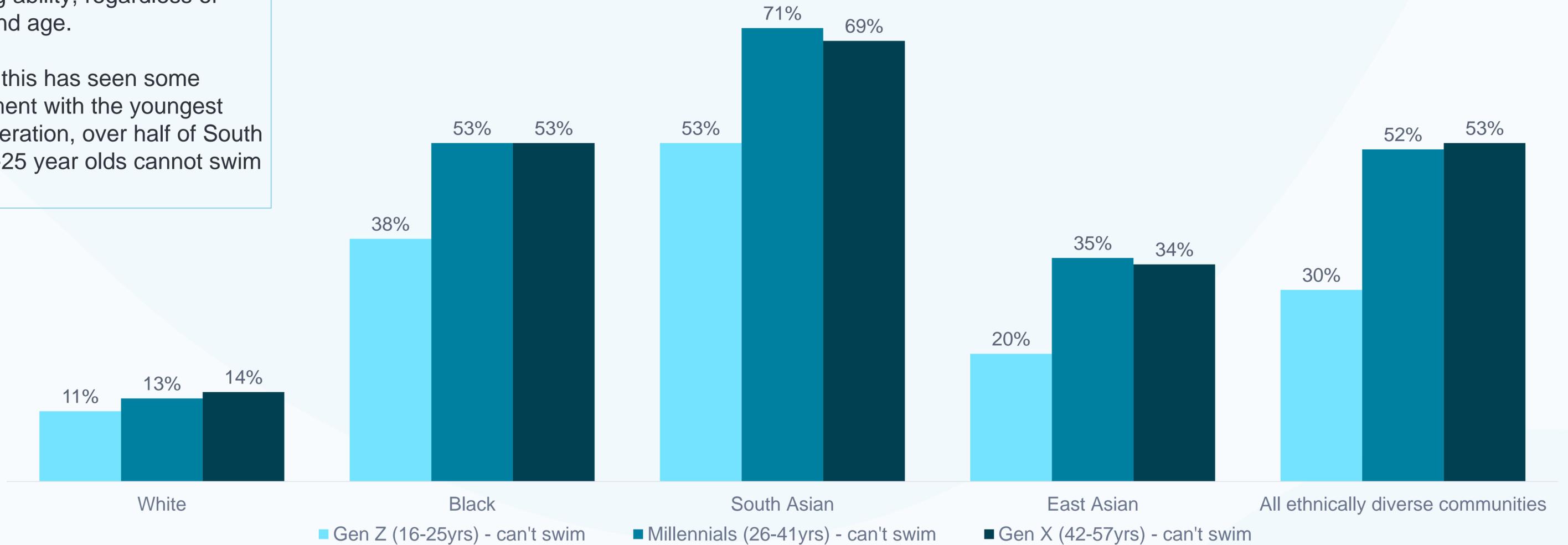


# While low ability is still apparent for the younger adult generation, there has been a shift towards improved ability for all ethnically diverse communities.

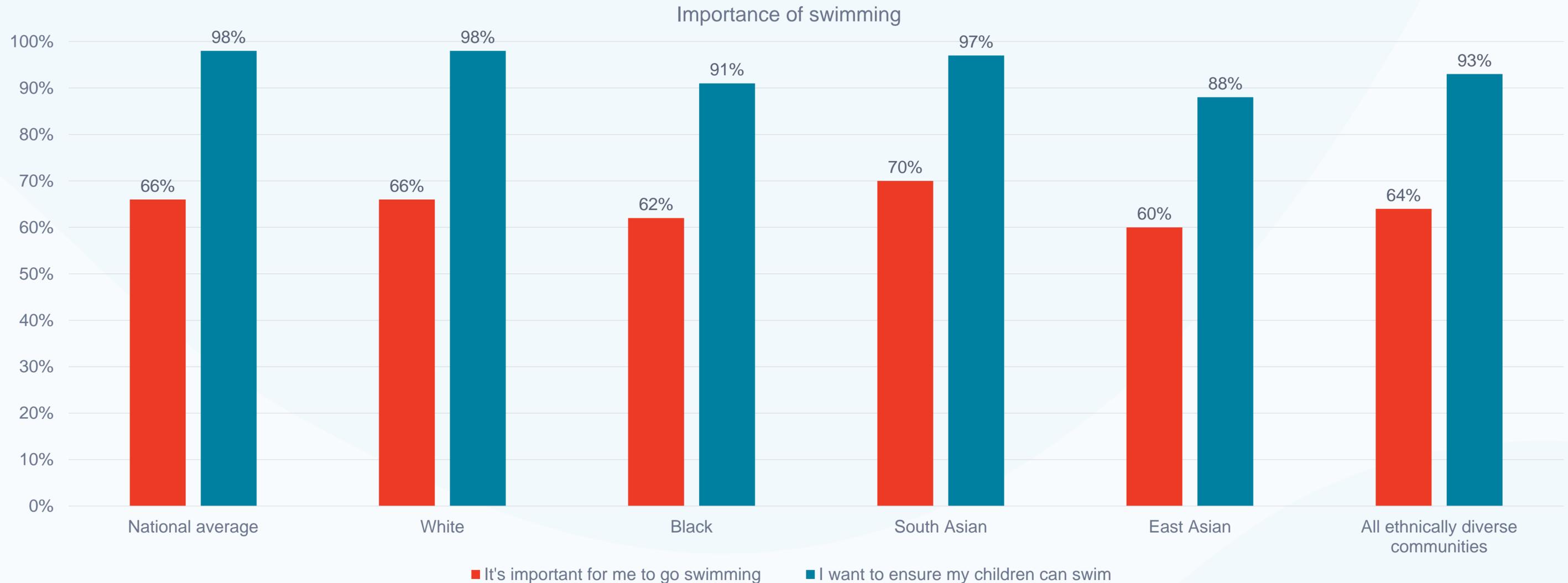
It is clear that South Asian adult communities have a lack of swimming ability, regardless of gender and age.

Although this has seen some improvement with the youngest adult generation, over half of South Asian 16-25 year olds cannot swim 25m.

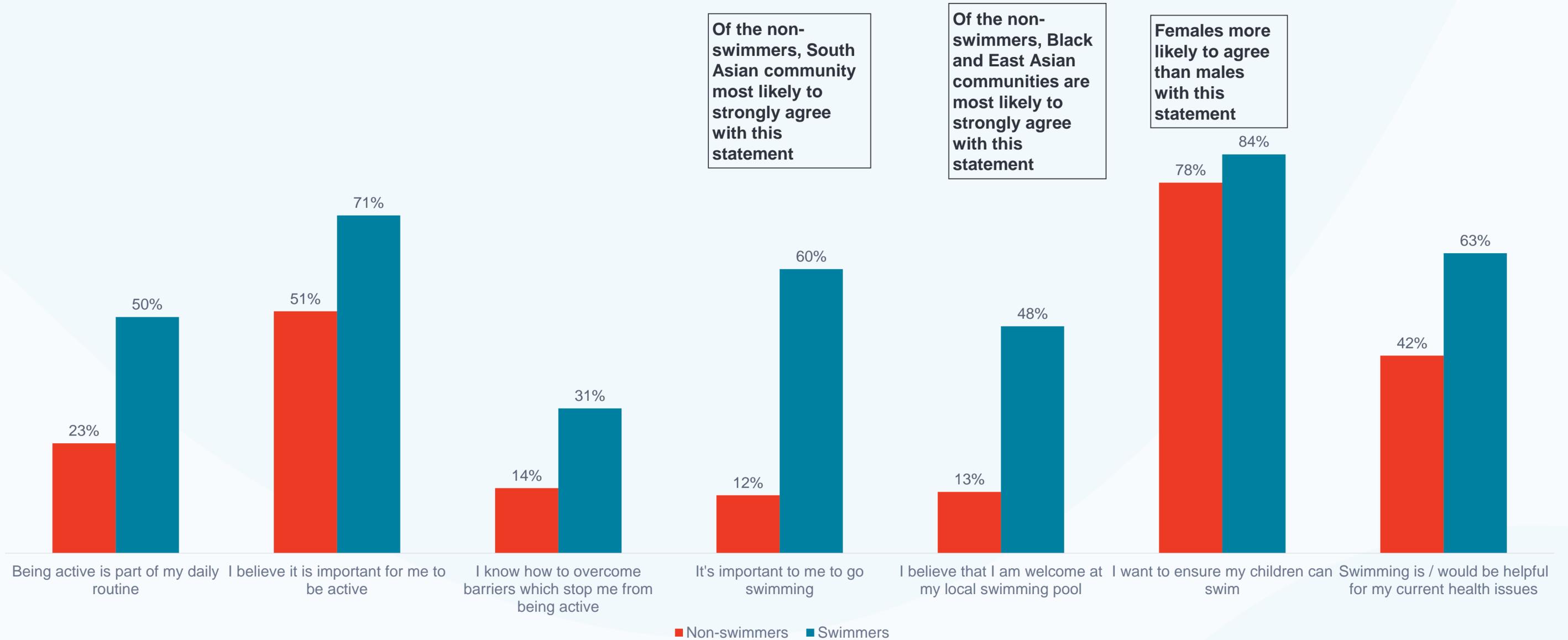
Cannot swim 25m unaided by generation



**Despite disparities in ability, there is little difference in the importance placed on swimming. 93% of ethnically diverse communities want to ensure their children can swim, a figure which is higher for South Asian communities.**



# Regardless of their swimming frequency, many people agree that they want to ensure their children can swim



Of the non-swimmers, South Asian community most likely to strongly agree with this statement

Of the non-swimmers, Black and East Asian communities are most likely to strongly agree with this statement

Females more likely to agree than males with this statement



Of those responding from an ethnically diverse community ...



97% perceive swimming as an important skill to have



95% believe swimming is enjoyable and satisfying



93% want to ensure their child can swim



92% think swimming is a fun family activity



There are also some less positive perceptions of swimming from ethnically diverse communities ...



Only 59% see swimming as accessible



39% say swimming is only for particular groups of people



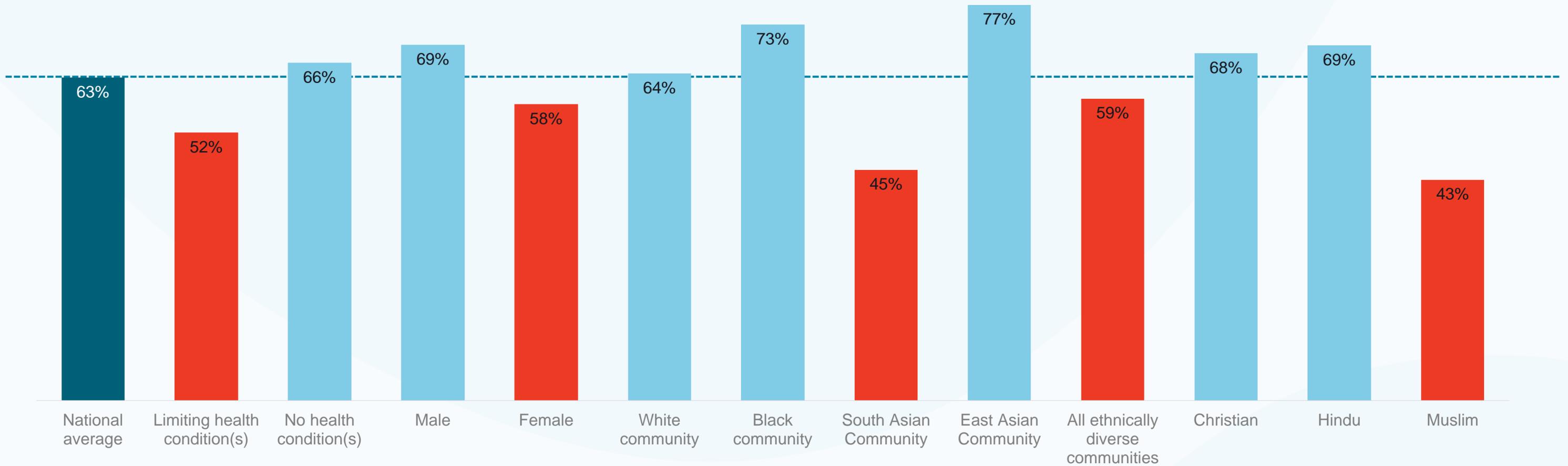
Only 63% say it is easy to take part in (compared to 71% White community)



74% perceive swimming as being competitive

# Muslims, South Asians, those with a limiting health condition and females are less likely to agree that swimming is accessible.

% agree with “swimming is an activity that is accessible”





“Too busy for weak swimmers”



“I struggle in lanes sessions as I have autism and ADHD. I am not very coordinated, and struggle to know where to swim and how I fit into the groups of swimmers.”



“There is insufficient access to suitable ladies only swimming and no men only swimming for Muslim Men so my husband and sons can not go swimming at all.”

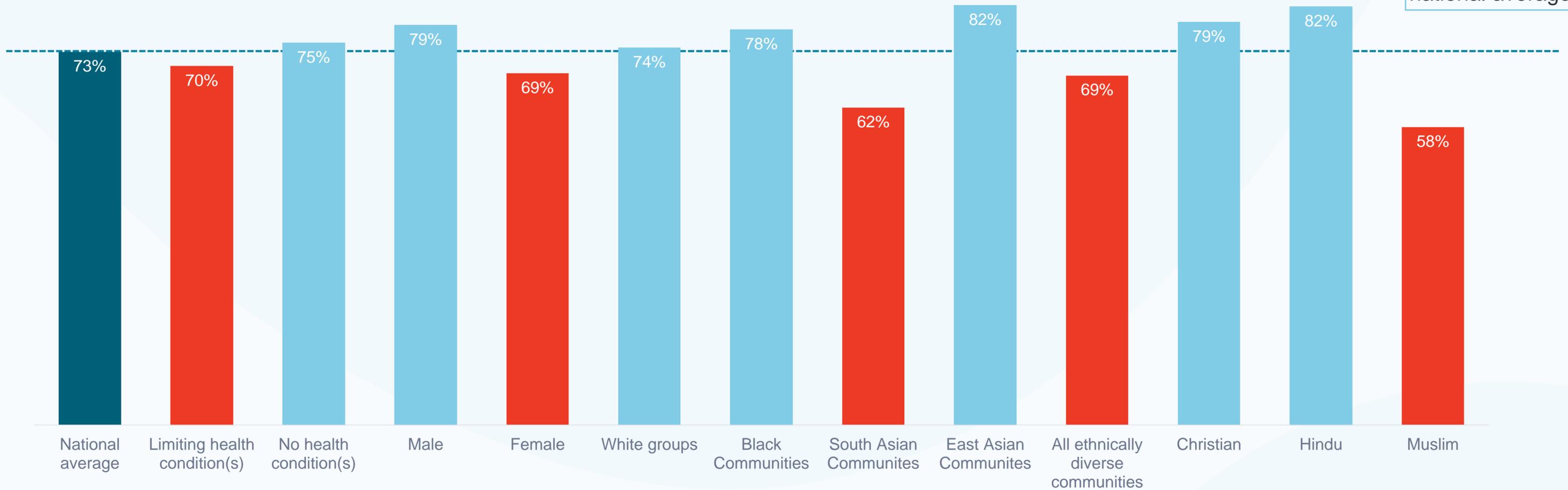


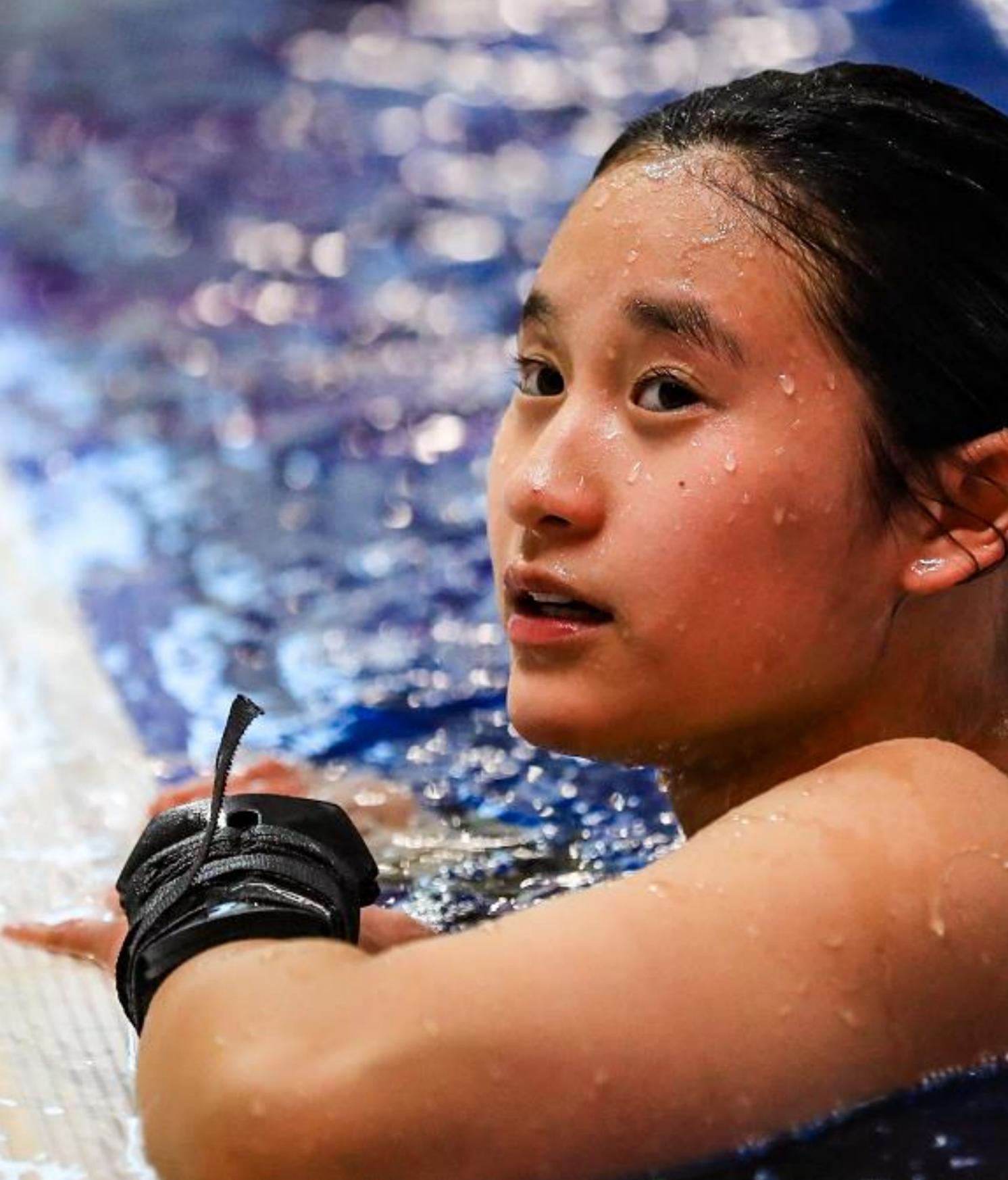
“The prices for lessons are expensive and block poorer communities from accessing swimming lessons.”

# Muslims, South Asians, those with a limiting health condition and females are less likely to agree that swimming is open to all people.

% agree with "swimming is an activity that is open to all people"

In addition, 40% of South Asian participants agreed that "swimming is only for particular groups of people", in comparison to 20% national average.





“as a non binary person I wouldn't feel comfortable going to a swimming pool unless it was for a trans swim group. It would be stressful if I had to think about having to use gendered changing rooms. And in the pool I would feel anxious about people staring at my chest scars from surgery.”



“women are often denied entry citing health and safety of swim certified full body, even at times told it is unhygienic”



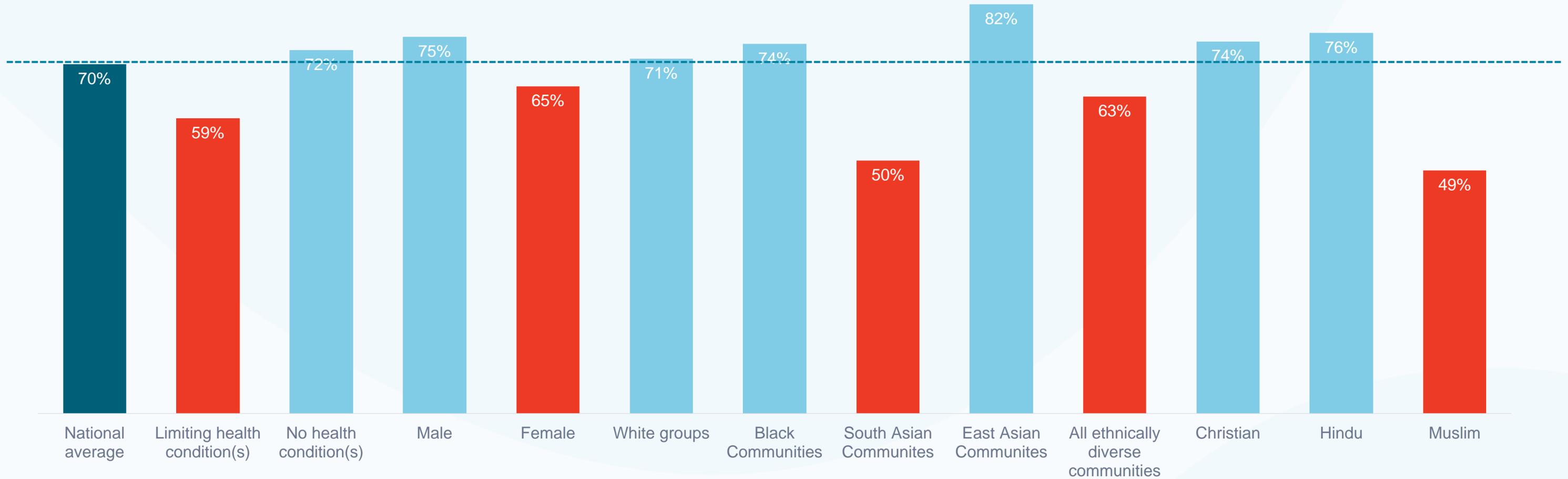
“I can only swim in female only environments. These are not provided in my area”



“Traditionally we were told that Black people don't float so when someone black swims we look at it as a major achievement like going to Oxford or Cambridge. Almost in achievable. It's hard to get that out of your mind.”

# Muslims, South Asians, those with a limiting health condition and females are less likely to agree that swimming is easy to take part in

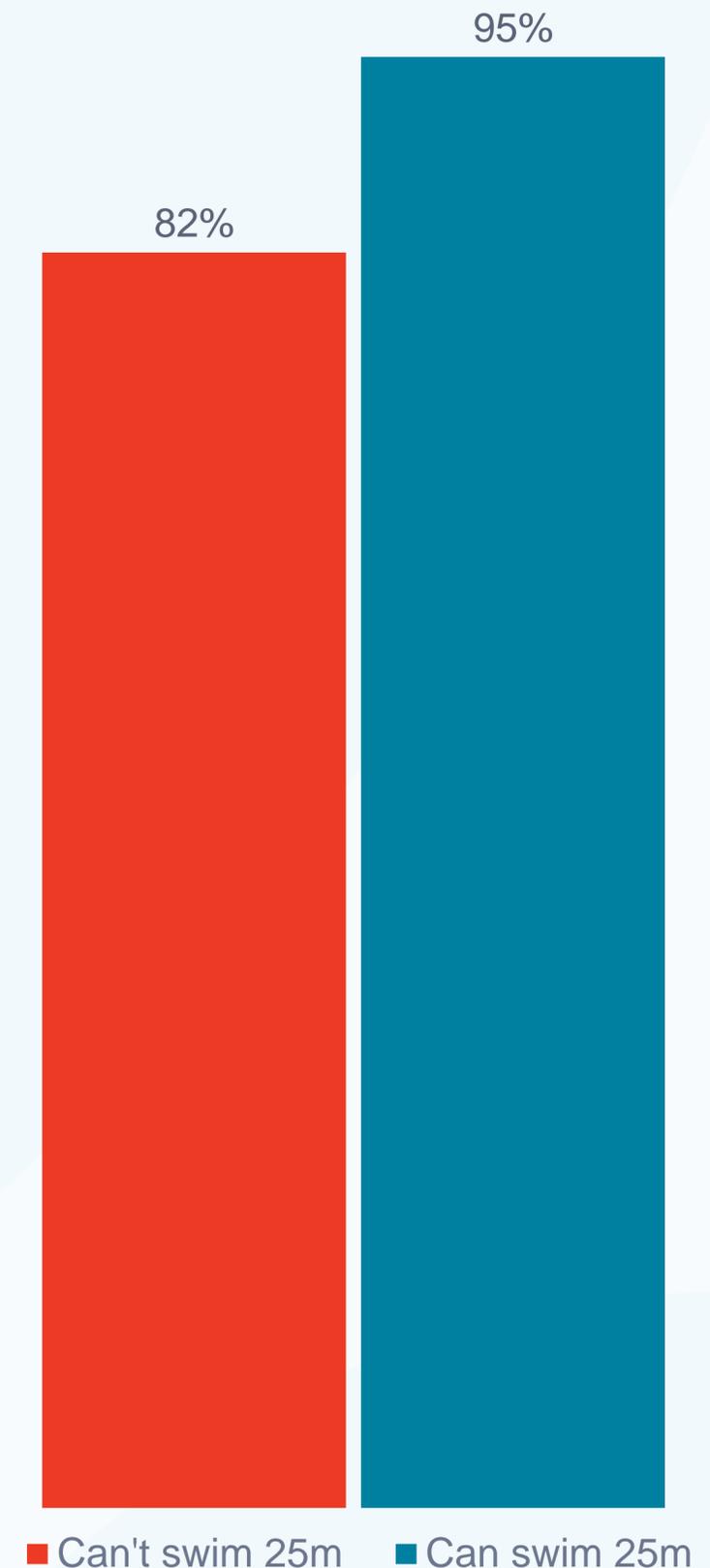
% agree with "Swimming is an activity that is easy to take part in"



## Focus on perception: “Swimming is safe”

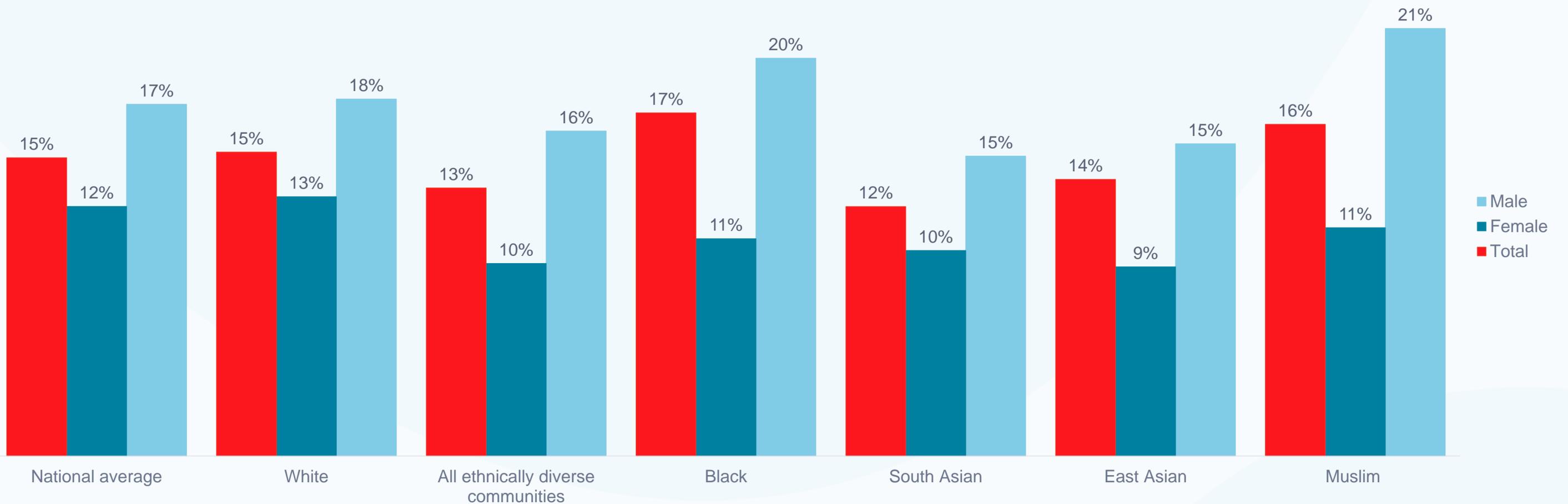
- The data shows that not feeling swimming is safe is linked to an individual's swimming ability.
- The comments received in relation to this question tended to focus on the possibility of drowning, due to lack of ability. As opposed to any other cause for safety concern.
- There were no gender differences to note, in regards to who is more likely to perceive swimming as safe

I know it can be dangerous if you  
**don't know how  
to swim**



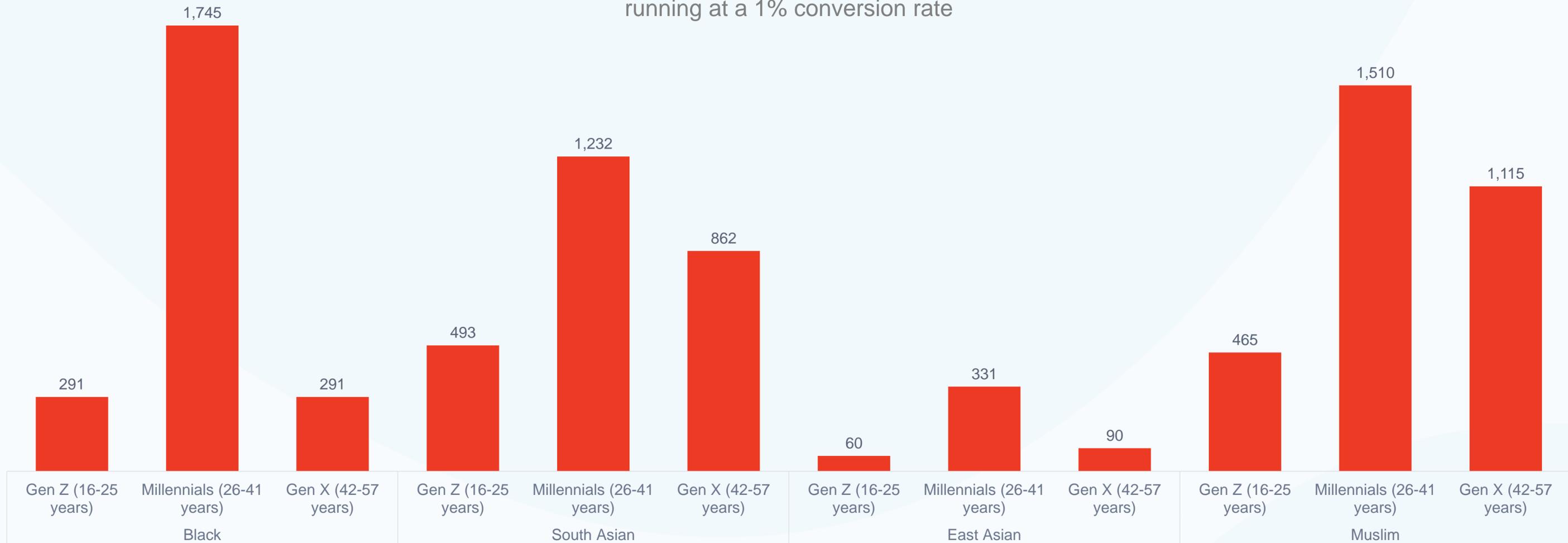
# 15% (6.7mil) of adults see being a swimming teacher as a credible career. Men are more likely to see teaching as a credible career, as well as Black communities.

% strongly agree that being a swimming teacher is a credible career



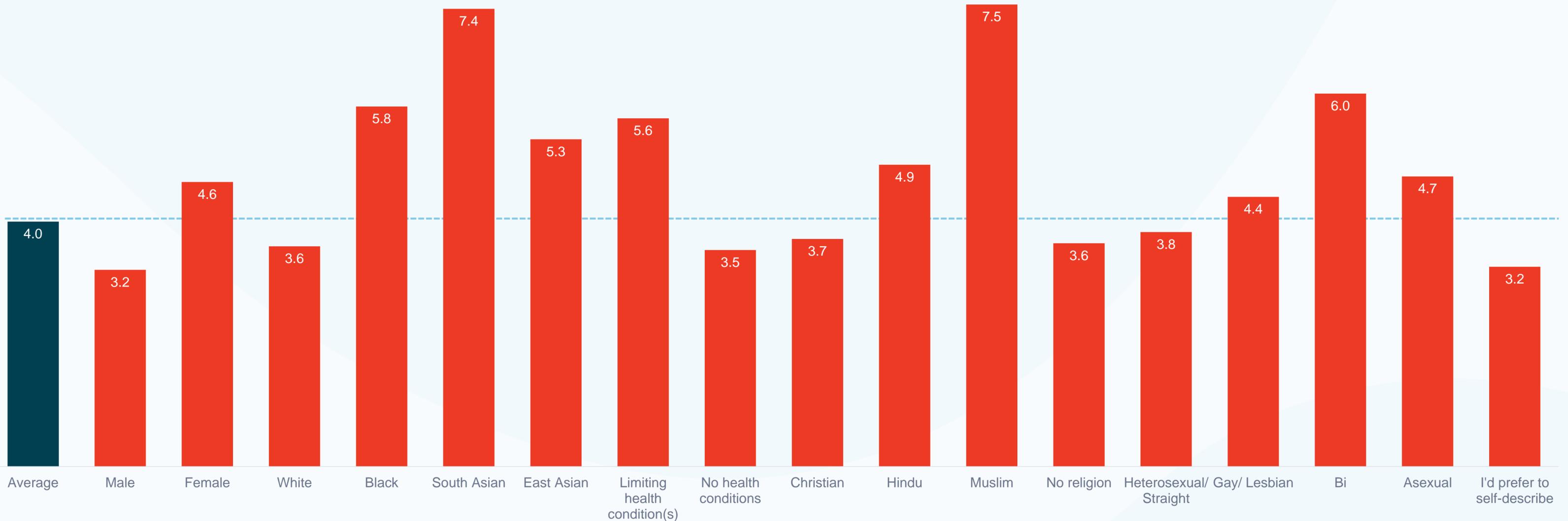
# When focusing on those who ‘strongly agree’ that swim teaching is a credible career, it is clear that ethnically diverse millennials (26-41yrs) are a target audience for career conversion.

Swimming teaching credibility by ethnic group broken down by generation running at a 1% conversion rate



**Before we delve into the barriers for each demographic, we wanted to explore the average number of barriers facing the population when considering going swimming. It is clear that some demographics face more barriers than others.**

Average number of barriers to swimming per group



# A model for changing behaviour

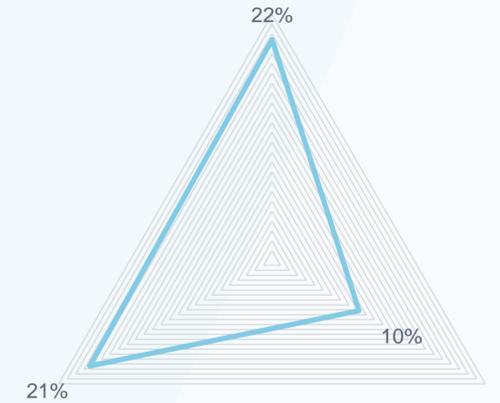
## The COM-B model:

Behaviour = Capability +  
Opportunity + Motivation

- **Capability:** Does an individual has the necessary skills and mental ability to do the desired behaviour?
- **Opportunity:** Factors that lie beyond the individual that might help enable a behaviour, or make it possible, such as the environment
- **Motivation:** What might energise and direct their behaviour?

- The COM-B model, developed by University College London, is used to firstly analyse and then ultimately tackle behavioural challenges – in this case, barriers to going swimming.
- The COM-B model suggests that people need sufficient levels of three interacting elements - capability (C), opportunity (O) and motivation (M) – in order to perform a behaviour (B). The three elements are interlinked and can feed into each other. For example, increased opportunity or higher capability might increase motivation.
- COM-B provides a structured framework and a common reference point for us to think about the behaviour we want to change (going swimming).

# Barriers facing the South Asian community



↑**21.4%** up 11.6% on national average

## Capability

Capability to swim 25m being very low compared to the national average, the knock on effect to capability is very obvious:

	National average	South Asian Community	% variance
I don't know how to swim	12.5%	38.4%	208.0%
I don't feel confident in or around water	20.0%	30.3%	51.8%
I have forgotten how to swim	7.2%	21.7%	203.7%
I have a fear of drowning	11.3%	20.8%	84.1%

33% of those from the South Asian community feel they cannot wear what they want to so swimming. This is not exclusive across all individual groups however.

↑**22.4%** up 7.2% on national average

## Opportunity

Religious and gender requirements as well as privacy are key barriers among South Asian Community:

	National average	South Asian Community	% variance
The pool does not have gender specific swim sessions	9.7%	40.7%	320.5%
I require lifeguards/ swimming teachers to be of the same gender as me	5.2%	30.8%	494.5%
The pool can be viewed by others who are not taking part in the session	12.4%	28.8%	132.6%
The pool does not have gender segregated changing rooms	8.2%	22.7%	176.4%
The pool timetable clashes with my religious practices	3.2%	22.2%	591.9%

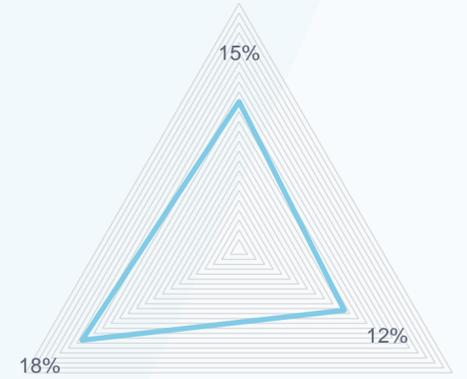
↑**10.2%** up 1.1% on national average

## Motivation

31% of those from South Asian communities state not wanting people to see them in their swimwear as a barrier.

19% state swimming doesn't feel a place for them.

	National average	South Asian Community	% variance
I don't want people to see me in swim wear	22.1%	30.8%	39.1%
Swimming pools don't feel like a place for someone like me	12.1%	19.1%	57.6%



# Barriers facing the Black community

↑18.4% up 8.6% on national average

## Capability

Of the three sets of barriers, Capability has the highest score, significantly higher than national average.

	National average	Black community	% variance
I don't feel confident in or around water	20.0%	32.4%	62.1%
I don't know how to swim	12.5%	31.4%	151.7%
I have a fear of drowning	11.3%	24.8%	118.9%
I have forgotten how to swim	7.2%	17.8%	149.2%

↓15.0% down 0.2% on national average

## Opportunity

Largely, opportunity barriers fall below the national average for Black communities.

38% of those from the Black community state: 'I do other things with my free time'.

Other than those with limiting health conditions, Black communities have one of the highest rates of stating they have no-one to swim with.

↑12.3% up 3.3% on national average

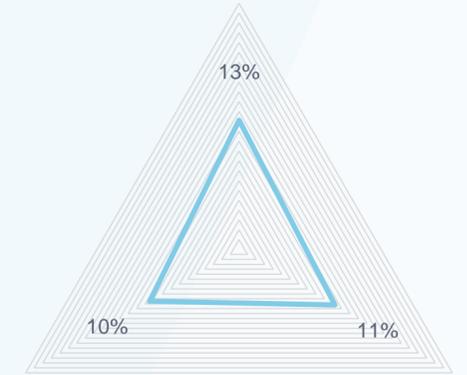
## Motivation

The Black community lack motivation to swim, with higher than average barriers in this category.

The motivation barriers are distinct to this community, as they do not share any of the top barriers nationally and among other ethnic groups.

Instead, those from the Black community are most likely to have barriers around their hair and skin:

	National average	Black community	% variance
The pool water would damage my hair	5.2%	23.5%	350.3%
I don't want to get my hair wet	5.8%	22.5%	290.0%
The pool water would damage my skin	4.7%	10.9%	131.2%



# Barriers facing the East Asian community

↑10.5% up 0.7% on national average

## Capability

Those from the East Asian community stating they have a fear of drowning is significantly higher than the national average:

	National average	East Asian community	% variance
I have a fear of drowning	11.3%	20.6%	82.3%

With most capability barriers fall below the national average scores, this barrier is the driver for the overall score being above average for the East Asian community.

↓13.1% down 2.1% on national average

## Opportunity

As the lower overall score would suggest, opportunity barriers for those from the East Asian community fall below the national averages.

Barriers with the largest variances on the average are related to the location of pools:

	National average	East Asian community	% variance
It's hard for me to get to my local pool	13.0%	19.8%	52.9%
It's too far to my nearest pool	13.5%	19.1%	41.5%
I don't know where my local pool(s) is	6.0%	8.4%	41.1%

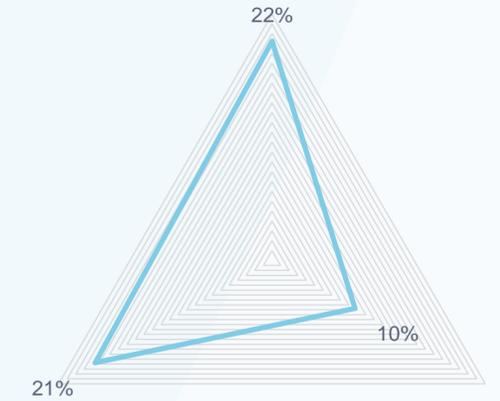
↑11.2% up 2.2% on national average

## Motivation

'Motivation' barriers are key when focusing on encouraging the East Asian community to swim:

	National average	East Asian community	% variance
I am worried about the safety of swimming	6.3%	13.0%	107.5%
It just doesn't interest me	7.9%	12.2%	55.0%
The pool water would damage my skin	4.7%	10.7%	126.9%
The pool water would damage my hair	5.2%	9.9%	89.9%
Swimming doesn't feel like an activity for someone like me	5.1%	9.9%	93.1%
Swimming is not an intensive enough activity for me	1.2%	7.6%	560.2%
I don't see the benefits of swimming	0.5%	4.6%	791.2%

# Barriers facing the Muslim community



↑ **20.7%** up 11.0% on national average

## Capability

Average capability barrier score much higher than the national average.

The main barrier (37%) is not being able to wear what they want/ not knowing what they can wear to go swimming.

31% of people of the Muslim community state not knowing how to swim as a key barrier to not swimming more.

↑ **22.3%** up 7.1% on national average

## Opportunity

Average opportunity barrier score much higher than the national average.

The key opportunity barriers, largely unique to the Muslim community, are barriers around gender and faith requirements:

	National average	Muslim community
The pool does not have gender specific swim sessions	9.7%	44.0%
The pool does not have gender segregated changing rooms	8.2%	23.5%
I require lifeguards/swimming teachers to be of the same gender as me	5.2%	31.5%
The pool timetable clashes with my religious practices	3.2%	26.7%

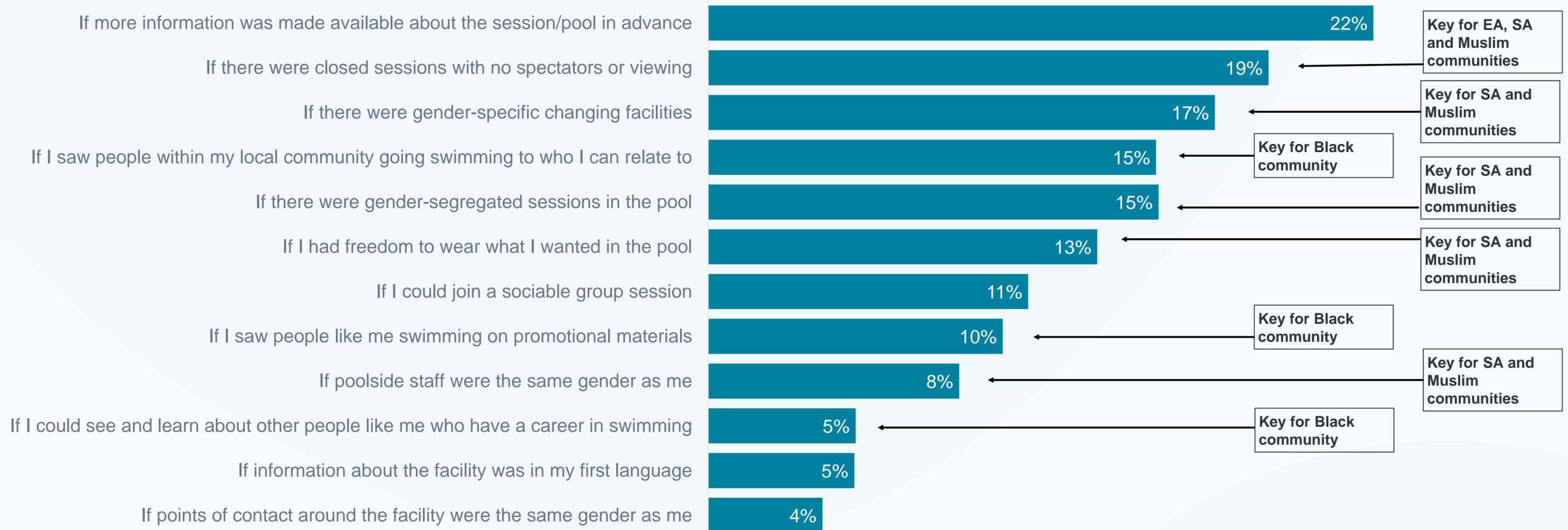
↑ **9.7%** up 0.7% on national average

## Motivation

Motivation is not the key barrier for swimming facing the Muslim community. Effort instead should be focused on reducing capability and opportunity barriers.

One motivation barrier facing the community (that does not differ significantly from the national view) however is people from the Muslim community feeling swimming pools are not for “someone like me”.

**When looking at ‘likelihood to swim’, members of the Black community over index on factors relating to ‘seeing people like me’ in regards to swimming, whereas South Asian and Muslim communities would be more likely to swim if they had access to gender-specific, private sessions with freedom to wear what they want**



■ National average

# 53% (24.4mil) of adults state they want to swim more in the next 12 months, 23% (5.6mil) of which have not gone swimming in the last year

Of those who have not swum in the last 12 months, % who strongly agree that they want swim more in the next 12 months extrapolated to estimate total population per grouping

