

# British and American norms in the Trinidadian English lexicon

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## Abstract

Previous work on norm orientations in the Caribbean Englishes has focussed largely on phonological norms, such as accents, and, to a lesser extent, grammatical norm orientation. Outside of the publication of dictionaries, however, lexical norms and their spread have received little attention. This paper examines lexical norm orientations in Trinidadian English, presenting the results of a corpus-based study and survey study of the lexical preferences of speakers of Trinidadian English. The findings suggest that while there is evidence of American influence on Trinidadian lexicon, British variants persist. Indeed, British and American variants often coexist, albeit with different connotations in Trinidadian English. From a methodological standpoint, this paper demonstrates the benefits of using a mixed-methods approach in looking at norms, particularly with regard to lexicon.

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

The linguistic hallmark of development in the evolution of world Englishes is perhaps best summed up in one word: normativity. Kachru's Three Circles Model and Schneider's (2007) Dynamic Model view norm orientation as the linguistic yardstick by which progress from one phase to another can be measured. Indeed, two of the Dynamic Model's five phases, phase two (exonormative orientation) and phase four (endonormative orientation), are explicitly named for this. With specific regard to lexis, evidence of endonormative alignment is present from as early as phase 1 of Schneider's model, where borrowing of place names is reported as the 'most persistent' (Schneider, 2007, p. 36) form of

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borrowing, and culminates around phase 4 in the production of dictionaries (Schneider, 2007, p. 52). Because Schneider's model is rooted in (post)colonialism, the provider of the external norm is often, but not always, assumed to be British English. Other scholars, however, have noted the increasing influence of American English on world Englishes across the linguistic system (see Awonusi, 1994 for American influence on Nigerian English; Goncalves et al., 2018 for an overview of the spread of American English in English around the world), and report a gradual shifting from British norms to American norms in world Englishes, largely as a result of globalisation. This paper examines shifts in lexical norm orientations in Trinidadian English. Specifically, it poses the following questions:

- Do speakers of Trinidadian English orient their vocabulary towards British or American norms?
- What differences in norm orientations can be observed among Trinidadians of different ages?
- What differences in norm orientations can be observed among Trinidadian residents in Trinidad and those (i) who have lived outside of Trinidad for a period of one year or more but since returned and (ii) who currently reside outside of Trinidad?

The paper proceeds as follows: In the next section, normativity in world Englishes and especially Trinidadian English will be discussed. The mixed-methods approach used in this study will then be presented, with the methods of the corpus study described first, followed by the methods used in the survey studies. Following this, the results of the two studies will be presented and used as the basis for an exploration of norm orientations in Trinidadian English and how these may be measured.

## 2 | BACKGROUND

### 2.1 | Normativity in world Englishes

Variation in Englishes can be described in terms of what Bamgbose (1998, p. 2) calls feature norms, that is, properties 'of spoken or written language at whatever level (e.g., phonetic, phonological, morphological, syntactic, orthographic, etc.) and the rules that go with [their] production or use.' Thus, Kachru's discipline-defining Three Circles Model (1985) divides Englishes into circles largely based on how norms are developed and propagated. Inner Circle Englishes, such as American and British varieties, are described as norm-providing, meaning that features norms originate there and are propagated from there, in an almost wave-like fashion. Outer Circle Englishes, such as the variety spoken in Trinidad,<sup>1</sup> are, in contrast, said to be norm-developing, meaning that new norms may arise, become regularised and standardised in those varieties. Outer Circle varieties of English, however, are not solely norm-developing; in earlier stages of their formation, in particular, norms of use would have been dictated by Inner Circle varieties. Traditionally, therefore, Outer Circle varieties of English are considered to have parent varieties, often a result of colonialism; for example, Trinidadian English could be argued to have a British English parent since Trinidad is a former British colony. Norms in the daughter varieties are assumed to be modelled upon norms in the parent variety and innovations are marked in terms of the degree of difference from the parent variety. Finally, Expanding Circle varieties are held to be norm-dependent, meaning that speakers of those varieties depend on other speakers, typically Inner Circle speakers, for models of language use.

### 2.2 | Lexical sources and norm orientations in Trinidadian English

In Trinidad, the local variety of standardized English, standardized Trinidadian English (STE), is spoken alongside Trinidadian English Creole (TEC). The waves of migration and settlement that characterised Trinidad's pre-independence history have left an indelible mark on both TEC and STE. The vocabulary of both varieties contains a

considerable amount of items from a wide range of sources: Amerindian place names from the island's pre-Colombian residents (Regis, 2016, p. 44); a scattering of Spanish lexical items due to nearly 300 years of Spanish colonialism; Yoruba and Kikongo lexical items from the languages of the Africans (Winer, 1993, 2009) kidnapped and enslaved in the Caribbean; French and French-Creole lexis from the French planters who settled on the island during the 18th century (Winer, 2009); and Hindi and Bhojpuri items indentured labourers brought from India from 1845 onwards (Regis, 2016, pp. 46–47; Winer, 2008). However, as TEC is typologically considered an English-lexicon creole, and STE a variety of English, it goes without saying that a significant proportion of the vocabulary of both varieties is derived from English.

Winer (1993) argues that the basic English vocabulary of STE is derived from British English, due to the island's colonial history. As Hackert (2015, p. 87) and others note, English was the language of the 'British colonial administrators, missionaries, and educators,' and even after independence in 1962, British structures and models persisted in terms of governance, education, and language. During the second world war, however, Trinidad's north-west coast was used as a US army base, and, from this period onwards, there has been increased contact between the United States and Trinidad, due to tourism, trade, migration, educational exchanges, and television and the media (Winer, 1993, p. 48). This, argues Winer, has resulted in attendant shifts in the lexical orientation of STE from a more British English orientation to an American English in some domains. Specifically, she points out that, while terms which denote 'official, educational or governmental' referents retain British English forms, there is evidence of change in progress towards American English terms, as in the semantic field of cars and driving, where the American terms prevail (pp. 49–50). Furthermore, there are cases of mixing. For example, Winer notes that while the word for protective glass in the front and back of the car in STE is the British *windscreen*, the word for the long extensions that clean this is *windshield wipers*, an American term. Elsewhere, she reports that 'the last letter of the alphabet is usually called BrE *zed*, but when used in Sesame Street songs, learned from TV, is pronounced AmE *zee*. Fried potatoes are generally called BrE *chips* at home, or at *fish and chips* or *chicken and chips* fast-food restaurants, but are increasingly called AmE *fries*' (Winer, 1993, pp. 49–50). Winer's claims are based on her years of ethnographic observation and so, though they are not quantified, give a reliable description of language use in Trinidad, at least in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Winer's claims are substantiated to some extent in subsequent work by Hänsel and Deuber (2013). In their study of norm orientations in the newspapers of three postcolonial varieties of English, the pair find that the Trinidadian *Guardian* newspaper makes use of more AmE than BrE word types, although there are overall more BrE (53%) than AmE (47%) tokens (Hänsel & Deuber, 2013, p. 342). Hänsel and Deuber take this as evidence of strong AmE influence on TSE, particularly when compared to varieties spoken in other postcolonial locations, namely Kenya and Singapore, and attribute this to geographical proximity and the importance of trade with the United States for Trinidad's economy (2013, p. 352). Although Deuber and Hänsel (2019) do not include Trinidadian English in their study of norms in the Caribbean, the pair's examination of 10 British and American variant pairs in newspapers in St. Kitts and Nevis, Dominica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Jamaica hints at a preference towards American English lexical variants in all varieties. In addition to this, Deuber et al. (2021), in a study of norm orientation in 10 Caribbean Englishes using newspaper data from each of the islands, found that, in general, AmE variants are more prevalent in lexis than in orthography. However, their data also suggest that American influence is not exerted on the entire lexis of Caribbean Englishes, but rather in certain semantic fields. Thus, Caribbean writers retain British variants when referring to 'traditional institutional structures or their members' (Deuber et al., 2021, p. 27), such as *trade union*, but employ American variants for words from the semantic field of technology, such as *cell phone*. Since, as Hänsel and Deuber (2013, p. 339) note, newspaper writing represents 'the written standard variety, a variety that is used by well-educated speakers and that is mostly oriented toward the norms that are taught in school,' this type of data is often considered to be a good guide to which forms speakers find acceptable and which forms might be considered standard. At the same time, the newspaper corpora tend to be quite small and thus yield relatively low token counts (Deuber et al., 2021, pp. 12–13). It is therefore worthwhile to carry out similar research with larger corpora and other data collection methods.

Beyond lexis, several other works have focused on changing norm orientations in Trinidadian English. In a diachronic study of newspaper language in the Bahamas and Trinidad, Hackert and Deuber (2015) found that while

Americanisation is indeed one factor influencing journalists' language in the two countries, there is also evidence of development away from both British and American norms in Caribbean journalism (p. 407). Meer and Deuber (2020) provide a powerful argument for understanding norm orientations in Trinidad as multinormative, with exonormative influences persisting through mobility and migration (p. 286), and endonormative influences arising through increased covert prestige of the Creole (p. 287). Thus, the pair note that, 'normativity is essentially multidimensional, that is, it involves the coexistence of different local, regional, or global standards; exo- and endonormative aspects may be incorporated in such a way that they cannot be clearly differentiated, and there may be fine-grained differences in status between varieties' (p. 288).

Meer and Deuber observe the multinormativity through language attitudes, but propose that it may also be present in structural aspects of language, pointing out that 'different lexical, morpho-syntactic, or phonological features associated with different norms may be accepted and used depending on the context, the formality, the interlocutor, or genre' (2020, p. 289). The current work explores this assertion by looking at lexical norms in Trinidadian English.

### 3 | DATA AND METHOD

#### 3.1 | The corpus study

This study used a mixed-methods approach to determine the lexical orientations of STE speakers. In the first phase, a concordance was carried out using the Trinidad and Tobago component of the International Corpus of English (ICE-TT). ICE corpora are organised into four main categories: dialogues and monologues for spoken texts, non-printed and printed for written texts, with a total of 1 million words. Each text category comprises a number of different text types, so the breadth of human communication (with the exception of online language), is amply represented. The ICE-TT corpus contains samples of speech and writing from both Trinidad and Tobago, but this study makes use only of spoken and written texts by Trinidadian speakers and authors in keeping with previous work which has also employed only the Trinidadian texts in the corpus (Deuber, 2014; Deuber et al., 2021). Since all the Trinidadian texts were used, this study differs fundamentally from previous works on lexical normativity in Caribbean Englishes since previous studies (Hänsel & Deuber, 2013; Deuber & Hänsel, 2019; Deuber et al., 2021) focus solely on newspaper language. The present paper, by using the gamut of ICE text categories, examines norm orientations not only in formal, written language but also in more informal written text types as well as in formal and informal spoken text types.

Twenty-five pairs of words searched for were:

*zee/zed, fries/chips, vacation holiday, movie/film, zero/nought/naught, parking lot/carpark, store/shop, yard/garden, overpass/flyover, math/math, cellular/mobile (phone), garbage/rubbish, student/pupil, labour union/trade union, public transportation/transport, principal/headmaster/mistress, expiration/expiry date, driving/driver's license, license/number plate, drunk/drink driving, petrol/gas station, taxi rank/stand, eraser/rubber, afterwards-afterward, and towards/toward.*<sup>2</sup>

The list is by no means exhaustive and can be expanded upon in future works. For the exploratory phase, however, these items are sufficient. These items were selected based on the author's knowledge as a native speaker of STE, the items mentioned in Winer's (1993) monograph, and the items used which were used by both Hänsel and Deuber (2013) and Deuber et al. (2021), for the sake of comparison. Except for the case of *afterward/ afterwards* and *toward/ towards*, which are an adverb and preposition, respectively, and the case of *zero*, in which adjectival uses were also accepted, the analysis excludes all non-noun uses of the words searched. For the school-related pairs, that is, *principal/head master/mistress/teacher* and *student/pupil*, only tokens that referred to members of primary or secondary school communities were included. Thus, tokens referring to university students and to the campus principal of the University of the West Indies, for instance, were expunged. In addition to this, uses of the word which occurred in titles

or place names, such as *film* in Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival, *shop* in Miss Annette's Shop, or *transport* in Ministry of Works and Transport, as well as tokens produced by extra corpus speakers are also excluded from the analysis

Previous studies of world Englishes show how vocabulary choice can be affected by register. For example, Balasubramanian (2009) found that, in Indian English, uses of *keep* meaning *put* were more frequently seen in spoken registers than in written registers, and are more frequent in less formal text types, such as conversations, than in more formal text types, such as spoken news (2009, p. 120). Balasubramanian (2009) uses the ICE India corpus. Following this, in the present study, corpus analysis will include an examination of the lexical variation in different text categories. Davies and Fuchs (2015, p. 2) argue that the limited size of ICE corpora (1 million words) means that they are not optimal for studies of lexical variation. This shortcoming is noted. However, to date, no larger corpus of Trinidadian English exists.

### 3.2 | The survey studies

To date, the studies which have looked at norm orientations in terms of lexis in Caribbean Englishes have relied on corpora, and particularly on newspaper corpora (Hänsel & Deuber, 2013; Deuber & Hänsel, 2019; Deuber et al., 2021). However, because of the preference for smaller corpora (and the fact that big data corpora for Caribbean Englishes do not currently exist), the token counts for lexical items tend to be quite low, and thus do not always adequately represent actual usage. To circumvent this shortcoming, two online surveys were administered to internet users who identified as Trinidadian.

In the first survey, the social media platform Facebook was used as the point of data collection. Facebook's interface includes LIKE, LOVE, WOW, SAD, and ANGRY reaction buttons which allow users to react to other users' posts by choosing one of the emoticons. Users can see how many others responded to their post, receiving a numeric breakdown of the number of respondents choosing each emotion, as well as an overview of how each individual respondent reacted. Moreover, Facebook allows users to comment directly on other users' posts, and also to reply to comments that both the original poster and other commentators have made. Each day over an 11-day period, the author posted one pair from the pairs of words used in the corpus study. Respondents were asked to click the LIKE button if they favoured the British word, the LOVE button if they favoured the American word, and the WOW button if they believed they used both terms. Respondents were also invited to comment on the items in the comments section, which often gave further insights into the choices made.

The Facebook participants were self-selected and included both resident and transnational Trinidadians. Linguistic research, including research on computer-mediated communication, often has as its locus a speech community, that is, 'a group of people with shared norms, or common evaluations of linguistic variables' (Fought, 2006, p. 255). In world Englishes research specifically, speech communities are linked to specific national, physical, or geographical spaces, as broad and as populous as Nigeria or as narrow as a town in Trinidad. The spread of globalisation has expanded studies to include transnational speech communities of world Englishes speakers (Hundt & Sharma, 2014), and online communities, albeit based in the diaspora (Hinrichs, 2018 for Jamaican diaspora and Honkanen, 2020 for Nigerian diaspora). In these works, transnational speakers and communities are understood as separate from their home communities, even though both home and host communities have been found to influence their language use and attitudes (see Sharma, 2014 on South Asian English speakers in London). There are a few examples of work that looks at the language of both diasporic and non-diasporic speakers, but this is the exception (Heyd & Honkanen, 2015). However, '[t]hrough the high mobility of speakers, linguistic features become globally available resources that are used to claim and affiliate with certain stances and identities' (Heyd & Honkanen, 2015, p. 17), regardless of physical location, and speakers are able to draw on these features whenever and wherever they please. Furthermore, the technological advances of the past two decades have meant that diaspora speakers are able to maintain constant contact with home communities, retaining their psychological, though not physical, membership. Critically, a 2020 report (Orozco, 2020) showed that nearly a quarter of the Trinidad and Tobago population lived outside of the country, with approximately 83 per cent of this population residing in the United States. For these reasons, diasporic speakers were also included in the survey

studies reported here. Their inclusion allows for the comparison of their vocabulary choices with that of Trinidadians residing in Trinidad.

A second survey, using more traditional survey methodology, was also conducted. It comprised two main sections. The first was a brief background information section which gathered respondents' age, gender, and location (that is, whether or not they were currently in Trinidad), as well as information on time spent abroad. This was seen as particularly important as extended periods abroad would have brought respondents in contact with other varieties of English which may have affected their language choice. The second part of the survey comprised 19 pairs of words, based on the pairs examined in Deuber et al. (2021) as well as those discussed in Winer (1993). Respondents were given a situation and then asked to say which of the words they believed they used more frequently, or whether they believed they used the words about equally. Respondents also had the option to choose Other and provide another option, which several of them did. The paired item questions required a response; the survey could not be submitted unless all questions had been answered. This is one advantage of conducting online questionnaires since it results in fewer empty cells and incomplete questionnaires, a feature which is difficult to control for in traditional pen and paper approaches. The final item in the questionnaire allowed respondents to share any concerns and questions they had or any points on which they wanted to expand. The entire questionnaire was designed to be completed in five minutes. The questionnaire was designed using Google Docs and distributed using the friend-of-a-friend technique on Facebook. Respondents were also asked to share the link with other users. This ensured that the questionnaire went beyond the researcher's network. In the analysis which follows, quantitative results will be based on the results of the traditional survey method. The comments and insights gained from the Facebook data will be drawn upon in the qualitative discussion. Where comments were not taken from Facebook, this will be clearly marked.

In total, 311 Trinidadians participated in the survey. They ranged in age from 12 to 80 and included both Trinidadians residing in Trinidad and members of the diaspora. Resident Trinidadians accounted for 83 per cent of all respondents (258 people), while non-resident Trinidadians accounted for the remaining 17 per cent (53 people). A total of 41.8 per cent of all respondents (130 people) lived outside of Trinidad for a period of longer than one year in a total of 22 different countries. The majority of these had lived in the United States (37.7 per cent), followed by the United Kingdom (22.3 per cent) and Canada (13.8 per cent). Girls and women accounted for 79.4 per cent of all respondents, while boys and men accounted for 20.3 per cent of all respondents. The remaining 0.3 per cent of respondents did not specify their gender.

## 4 | RESULTS

### 4.1 | The corpus study

In total, the ICE TT corpus contained 1434 tokens of the lexical pairs. The raw distribution of the tokens is shown in Table 1. Shaded rows represent American English variants. Numbers in bold represent higher token count. Search items with no tokens were excluded.

No tokens of the pairs *zee/zed*, *driving/driver's license*, and *number/license plate* were found in the spoken sub-corpus, while *zee/zed*, *driving/driver's license*, *drunk/drink driving gas/petrol station*, and *taxi stand/rank* all did not occur in the written sub-corpus. Furthermore, four pairs were overrepresented in the corpus. Of the 1434 tokens, some 979 were tokens of the pairs *zero/naught*, *principal/headmaster/mistress*, *student/pupil*, and *toward/towards*. Specifically, the tokens comprised mostly the preferred variant, so that there were, for instance, 535 tokens of *student* alone. While this is useful in highlighting the preference of this item over the British variant, *pupil*, inclusion in the analysis at this point would have skewed the data. Therefore, these words have been excluded from the statistical analysis but will be reintroduced when individual pairs are considered. The ensuing discussion is thus based on 455 observed tokens in the first instance.

**TABLE 1** Frequencies of British and American variants in ICE T&T

Word	ICE-TT spoken	ICE-TT written
fries	0	2
chips	1	0
vacation	11	11
holiday	8	12
movie	23	14
film	19	18
zero	56	10
naught	0	0
parking lot	1	0
carpark <sup>3</sup>	7	3
yard	4	14
garden	4	29
store	25	33
shop	30	13
overpass	1	2
flyover	0	0
math	2	7
maths	11	1
cell(ular) phone	10	14
mobile phone	5	5
garbage	8	4
rubbish	2	1
student	233	302
pupil	3	11
labour union	0	0
trade union	6	6
transportation	20	9
transport	13	21
principal	62	23
headteacher <sup>4</sup>	0	0
expiration date	1	1
expiry date	0	0
number plate	0	1
license plate	0	0
drunk driving	2	0
drink driving	0	0
gas station	2	0
petrol station	0	0

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Word	ICE-TT spoken	ICE-TT written
taxi stand	1	0
taxi rank	0	0
eraser	3	1
rubber	1	0
afterward	0	1
afterwards	9	2
toward	12	34
towards	159	74
	755	679
Total N 1434		

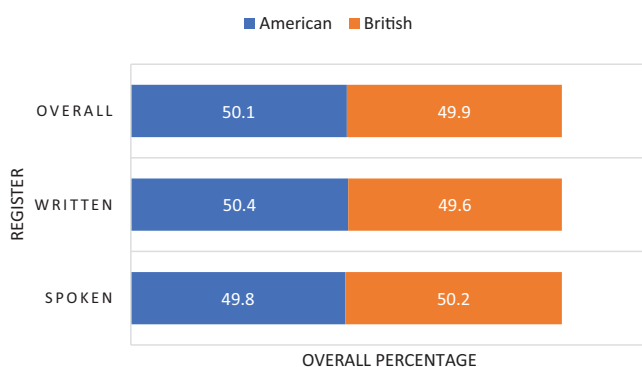


FIGURE 1 Proportions of British and American variants in ICE-TT [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)]

Figure 1 shows that overall, British and American variants are used about equally in the Trinidadian texts which make up ICE-TT. However, Figure 1 hides many of the individual lexical preferences which arose in the data. A closer look at the distributional data (Table 1) shows that there are some referents for which the American variant is used categorically or near categorically. There are also pairs for which the American variant is used slightly more frequently, though not categorically, as was the case for *cell/mobile phone*. Similarly, there are words in which the British variant is used categorically or near-categorically, such as *car park*, *trade union*, *afterwards*, and *towards*.

Figure 1 also shows that there may be differences according to register. American variants occur marginally more frequently than British variants in written texts, and less frequently than British variants in spoken texts. Here, too, register seems to effect which variant is used. In pairs of words such as *Math/Maths*, and *transportation/transport*, the variant used seemed to depend on the register. *Math* was used more frequently in written registers, whereas *Maths* occurred more often in spoken registers. In contrast, *transportation*, the American variant was used more frequently in spoken registers, while there are more tokens of the British variant *transport* in the written sub-corpus. A similar trend was seen with *movie/film*, though in this case the variant preferences were reversed, and the proportional differences were smaller: *movie* occurred more frequently in spoken texts (54.7% of all tokens), but *film* occurred more frequently in written texts (56.3% of all tokens). Register could also affect the proportion of tokens of the respective variants. In the pair *toward/towards*, there are more tokens of British *towards* in both spoken and written texts. However, there are differences in the overall proportions of the variants in the two registers. In spoken texts, *toward* accounts for just 7 per cent of all tokens; in written texts, it accounts for some 31.5 per cent of all tokens. A similar trend was seen with *movie film*, though in this case the variant preferences were reversed, and the proportional differences were smaller:



movie occurred more frequently in spoken texts (54.7% of all tokens), but *film* occurred more frequently in written texts (56.3% of all tokens). Despite these differences, a univariate analysis done with the dependent variable VARIETY (British, American) and the predictor variable REGISTER (written, spoken) confirmed that the slight difference in overall frequencies observed in Figure 1 was not significant ( $p = .363$ ).

Another feature of the variation observed in the corpus data was that variants might be used interchangeably within the same text by the same author or speaker, or despite another speaker in the same conversation using the other word. Consider, for example, (1) below, taken from text W2B-008, in which the author uses both *film* and *movie*. Overall, this text contained five tokens of *film* and six tokens of *movie*, all produced by a single author.

- (1) <p><#>But the **film** is just the beginning of the vision. <#>There is a book in the works, and Haupt and Krueger hope to see the costumes from the **movie** used as the start of a living- history presentation. (W2B-008)

Likewise, in (2), the same speaker alternates between the two variants.

- (2) <\$C><#>I can take you to the **store** that I go to in Sangre Grande<„>[...]

<\$C><#>And I was like <quote>but that's never stopped us before</quote><,> and she pulled me along past the **shop**

The corpus data also revealed that the British and American variants often have different collocations, as well as different connotations. This is seen most clearly in the distribution of *store/shop*. In the spoken data, 12 of 30 tokens of *shop* are found in text S1B-066, and are used with specific reference to an establishment which serves as a geographical landmark, and belongs to someone who appears to be known in the community, Miss Annette.<sup>5</sup> Other occurrences of *shop* collocated most frequently with *rum*, and also appeared with words such as *roti*, *Chinese*,<sup>6</sup> *pet*, and *shoe*. *Store*, on the other hand, appeared to be the more generic term, often occurring after the definite or indefinite article, or, less often, pre-modified by *hardware*, *drug*, *electronics*, and *bridal*. *Shop*, then, seems to collocate with more pedestrian items, while *store* collocates with more specialist and technological items.

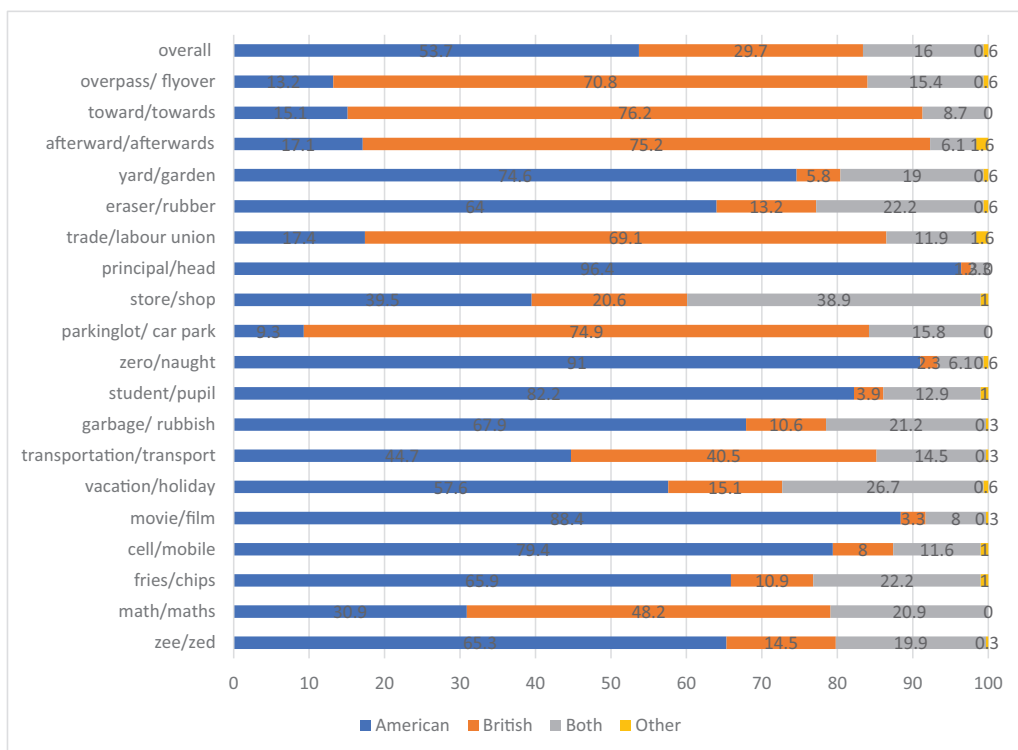
Another pair of words which displayed differences in collocation and connotation was *yard/garden*. As seen in Table 1, the uses of these two words were equal in spoken contexts, but *garden* was used more frequently than *yard* in written contexts. However, this seems to have less to do with a specific preference for either British or American variants. Although references to specific places, such as *Alice Yard*, were excluded from the token count, a number of uses of *yard* seem to align with a specific Trinidadian or Caribbean connotation of the word, meaning 'a communal space serving a number of dwelling units' (Winer, 2009, p. 979), as seen in (3).

- (3) sur<|>veyed living conditions of a yard setting. (ICE-TT W2A-002)

*Garden*, in contrast, has the connotation of a parcel of land on which plants for food or aesthetic purposes are grown. *Garden* collocates with the words *kitchen*, as in *kitchen garden*, or *plot*, as in *garden plot*, or *botanic*, though references to place names such as St. Vincent Botanic Garden were of course excluded from the analysis.

## 4.2 | Questionnaire results

This section reports the quantitative results for the traditional questionnaire, but draws on comments from both the traditional and Facebook questionnaires for a qualitative discussion of the data. The responses to the questionnaire are shown in Figure 2.



**FIGURE 2** Percentage reported variant use across 19 questionnaire pairs ( $n = 311$ ) [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)]

The questionnaire results showed that, overall, respondents claimed to use American variants more frequently than British variants, although a fair proportion (16%) said that they used both types of regional variants about equally across all words.

As seen with the corpus data, there appear to be individual lexical differences which affect the preferences: Respondents overwhelmingly preferred American *zee*, *cell phone*, *movie*, *student*, *zero*, and *yard*, but also prefer British *trade union*, *car park*, *afterwards*, *towards*, and *flyover*. A binary logistic regression with the dependent variable PREFERENCE (American vs British + Equal; tokens labelled 'other' were excluded), and the predictor variable WORD (that is, the individual words), showed that word was a highly significant predictor of reported use of American variants ( $p = .000$ ), confirming the patterns observed in Figure 2. Table 2 below shows the results of the logistic regression, ranking the lexical pairs from most likely to have an American variant to least likely. The table reports both log odds and factor weights. Higher log odds mean that American variants were more likely while lower log odds, and especially negative log odds, show that American variants were not more likely to be used than the British variant. Higher factor weights, near 1, mean that the effect of preference was high, while middling factor weights (around 0.5) suggest that preference had an overall neutral effect, and negative factor weights suggest a dispreference for the American variant.

Table 2 shows that for 10 of the 19 words, Trinidadian respondents clearly prefer American variants over British variants. For a further eight, the American variant is not the default option, and for one pair, *vacation/holiday* preference exercises a neutral effect. This suggests that overall, it is better to view preferences on an individual lexical basis and not simply in terms of an overall American/British dichotomy.

**TABLE 2** Ranking of British and American preferences in questionnaire responses

Lexical pair	Proportion American	Log odds	Factor weights
<i>principal/head teacher</i>	0.96	3.09	0.96
<i>zero/naught</i>	0.91	2.10	0.89
<i>movie/film</i>	0.88	1.82	0.86
<i>student/pupil</i>	0.82	1.32	0.79
<i>cell/mobile phone</i>	0.79	1.14	0.76
<i>yard/garden</i>	0.75	0.86	0.70
<i>garbage/rubbish</i>	0.68	0.53	0.63
<i>fries/chips</i>	0.61	.45	.66
<i>zee/zed</i>	0.65	0.42	0.60
<i>eraser/rubber</i>	0.64	0.36	0.59
<i>vacation/holiday</i>	0.58	0.09	0.52
<i>transportation/transport</i>	0.45	-0.43	0.40
<i>store/shop</i>	0.40	-0.64	0.35
<i>math/maths</i>	0.31	-1.02	0.27
<i>labour/trade union</i>	0.17	-1.78	0.15
<i>afterward/afterwards</i>	0.17	-1.80	0.14
<i>toward/towards</i>	0.15	-1.93	0.13
<i>overpass/flyover</i>	0.13	-2.10	0.11
<i>parking lot/car park</i>	0.09	-2.49	0.08

### 4.3 | Responses in the comments section

The comments section of both the traditional and Facebook questionnaires reveals that the meanings of the items as used in the Trinidadian context is not necessarily identical to their use in Inner Circle varieties. The reported use of the one variant over another, then, need not imply a British or American alignment, and may furthermore highlight two different referents in the Trinidadian context. Thus, for Trinidadian respondents a *yard* and a *garden* are not the same, neither are a *store* and a *shop*, nor a *vacation* and a *holiday*. It is perhaps then unsurprising that the latter two pairs have the highest proportion of respondents reporting using them equally; 38.9 per cent report doing so for *store/shop*, 26.7 per cent for *vacation/holiday*, and 19 per cent for *yard/garden*.

In the case of *yard/garden*, respondents highlight that their choice depends on the presence or absence of trees and other plants, and on whether the area is paved or not (4–5).

- (4) Yard is paved, garden has grass or cultivated plants
- (5) Garden if there are plants, yard if there is no plants

*Vacation/holiday* also have slightly different connotations. This is seen in both (6) and (7) below in which respondents discuss the association of *holiday* with public holidays in particular, and *vacation* with possible travel. Here, too, a Trinidadian variant, *go on holidays*,<sup>7</sup> is introduced by the participants (6–7).

- (6) Vacation - extended period away from work, usually for travel, but possibly for other reasons. Holiday - Holy Day, religious or otherwise, one specific day or occasion dedicated to celebrating a significant religious, cultural or historical event.
- (7) Lolol I say vacation but my older relatives say “go on holidays” which I would use if om speaking with them

*Store* and *shop* also have different connotations, as seen in (8–14).

- (8) Usually store, except when it's the community/village shop (traditional questionnaire)
- (9) Shop is for the small mom and pops establishment downstairs someone's home (traditional questionnaire)
- (10) The question with making purchases should specify groceries or other stuff.
- (11) A shop is where you buy biscuit and tamBRAND ball!
- (12) Hmmm...store to me has a bougie connotation attached vs shop which is more laid back.
- (13) Shops are British. Stores are American [...]. Shop more or less = parlour; stores are posher
- (14) A shop is your neighbourhood parlour. A store is a place I have to take some form of transport to get to.

The comments show that *store* has associations of distance, poshness, and bourgeoisie. A *shop*, on the other hand, has more grassroots connotations, associated with a place where one purchases simple goods (*biscuit and tamBRAND ball*). The grassroots connotations of *shop* are especially highlighted by the writer in extract (11)'s deliberate attempt to represent the TEC pronunciation of *tamarind*, and the fact that she does not mark the plural on either *biscuit* or *balls*, though these items are rarely sold individually. It is worth noting that several respondents (including two selected here) associate *shop* with *parlour*, which is not meant in the sense of a reception room in a home, but as a small establishment selling basic food supplies and snacks.

Some terms, such as *zed*, could also have extremely restricted uses which the general preference for *zee* left uncovered, but the comments section illuminated. In (15–17) it is shown that *zed* seems to be restricted to the spelling of names.

- (15) Strangely, I say zee when spelling most things but zed when spelling my name (traditional questionnaire)

- (16) My sister's name is Zed-a-h-r-a. I cannot spell it any other way. I tried. But it's how my parents would have taught me from toddler age...
- (17) Zed for my sons names BUT Zee-ebra

In addition to illuminating semantic and usage differences between the variants in the pairs, in the comments section, along with the option *other*, respondents provided local variants which the researcher had not considered. Although the 'other' responses account for less than 1 per cent of the total, taken alongside the comments, they provide insights that the restrictive, closed-question format of a questionnaire do not. Alternative variants were provided for the choices *labour/trade union*, *student/pupil*, *movie/film*, and *vacation/holiday*.

For *labour/trade union*, four respondents provided the alternative option of *union*, that is, without either pre-modifier. A search for *union* on its own in ICE-TT revealed that there were 16 tokens of this variant in the corpus, more than the other two variants combined. Similarly, while one person highlights semantic differences between *student/pupil*, the former attending secondary school while the latter attend primary school, a further two respondents say that their preferred term is *children* or *school children*. Here, too, a search of ICE-TT found 12 tokens of *school children*, which is greater than the number of tokens found for *pupil*, though much less than those for *student*.

Moreover, respondents both on Facebook and in the traditional questionnaire provide local alternatives to this pair. The first of these is Trinidadian *flim*, which appears once in the traditional questionnaire and once in a Facebook response 'forgot the flim option.' However, a search in ICE-TT for this item proved fruitless. This may be because ICE corpora do not generally record pronunciation features in the transcripts. Another respondent reports the use of *show*, a variant that is then corroborated by several other respondents. A search of ICE-TT retrieved only seven token of *show(s)* being used as a noun referring to some kind of production, but six of these were stage shows, and only one referred to movies or films.

Finally, the participant comments contained substantial information on perceived change from the use of one variant to another in the course of an individual lifespan. This was especially true of *eraser/rubber* (18–20).

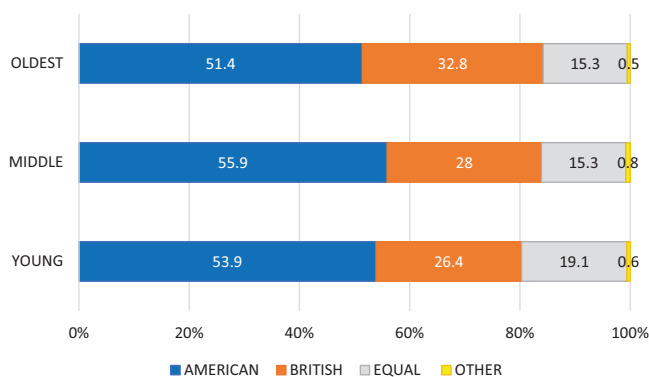
- (18) I said rubber as a child until it became synonymous with condom. Now I say eraser (traditional questionnaire)
- (19) Coming to think about it I think I used to say rubber in primary school and only said eraser as I got older
- (20) Rubber as a child ...eraser as an adult.

These results highlight that data on preferences represent a snapshot in time and it may well be that users' language changes over time. In the case of marked variables, these may be easily recalled and accessible for reflection, but this may not necessarily be the case for all language users. Furthermore, it highlights that choice of variant may be context dependent, and users do not automatically employ a single variant.

#### 4.4 | Differences according to age

In order to test whether a change in the norm orientations of Trinidadian English speakers was underway, the questionnaire respondents were divided into three groups: a younger group comprising respondents 12–25 ( $n = 53$ ), a middle group comprising respondents 26–40 ( $n = 130$ ), and an older group comprising respondents 40–65+<sup>8</sup> ( $n = 128$ ). Figure 3 shows the reported variant use by age group for the questionnaire.

Perhaps the most striking detail of Figure 3 is that respondents in all age groups generally report using American variants more than British variants. The overall proportion of American preferences is highest in the middle group (55.9%) and lowest in the oldest group (51.4%) but all groups report using American variants more than half of the time. Indeed, the most apparent difference across the groups is not in the use of American variants, but in the reported use of British variants. The oldest group reports using British variants more than the middle cohort, who in turn reports using British variants more than the youngest cohort.



**FIGURE 3** Lexical preferences by age in the questionnaire [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)]

In the comments, younger respondents make very strong associations between the British variant and age. The extracts in (21–26) highlight the association of *zed* (21–22), *naught* (23–24), and *film* (25–26) with older speakers.

- (21) My grandmother says ZED though  
 (22) Zee only old heads say zed  
 (23) I only hear my father (over 60) saying nought  
 (24) I hear older persons saying naught  
 (25) movie am I from the 70's, only old people say film  
 (26) Films are for old people

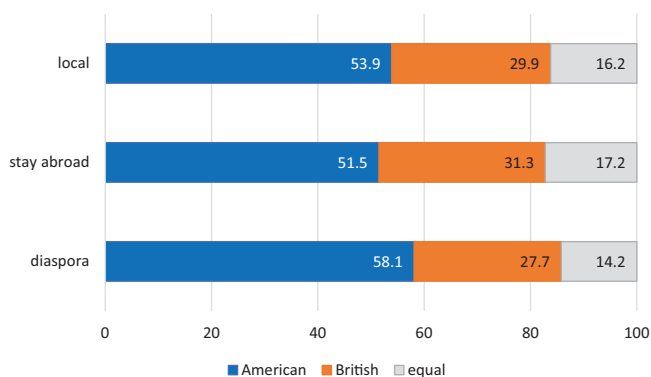
When a multivariate analysis was carried out on the questionnaire data AGE GROUP emerges as a significant predictor of variant use in few instances: *zee/zed* ( $F = 3.94, p = .020$ ), *movie/film* ( $F = 3.091, p = .047$ ), and *principal/headteacher* ( $F = 3.11, p = .046$ ). These findings are in concert with the impressions formed by the respondents in the comments: *zed* and *film* are often associated with older speakers who do in fact report using them more often than other speakers – even though these are not their most frequent choice. All other pairs showed no significant difference according to age group.

#### 4.5 | Contact with Inner Circle varieties of English

In a final stage of analysis, differences between groups in relation to the amount of contact they had with Inner Circle varieties of English, and especially American English, was considered. In order to examine this in the questionnaire data, speakers were grouped into three groups: locals who had never lived abroad ( $n = 181$ ); a stay abroad group, who had undertaken tertiary education outside the Caribbean and subsequently returned ( $n = 77$ ); and a diaspora group, comprising people who lived outside of Trinidad but who still identified as Trinidadians ( $n = 53$ ). The results of that analysis are shown in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4 shows that overall, Trinidadians in the diaspora report using American variants more than any other group and, conversely, report using British variants or the two variants equally less than the other two groups. A regression analysis comparing the effect of contact with American English, with regard both to Trinidadians who were at the time of data collection residing abroad and those who had spent time abroad and returned, on the use of American variants. The dependent variable PREFERENCE (American vs British + Equal) and the predictor variable was CONTACT (local vs stay, abroad vs diaspora). It was found that CONTACT was a significant predictor of American variant use ( $p = .039$ ), with the diaspora speakers currently residing outside of Trinidad being slightly more likely to use American variants than British variants. However, the low log odds (0.129) suggest that the magnitude of this effect is minor.

**FIGURE 4** Lexical preferences by contact [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)]



Moreover, there were differences across individual lexical items. A multivariate analysis of reported language use found that contact with American English was only a significant predictor of variant use in two pairs: *vacation/holiday* and *overpass/flyover*. However, it should be noted that, in the case of the latter pair, the preference was actually seen in the stay abroad group, and for the British variant, *flyover*. In spite of this, the questionnaire comments suggest that contact with varieties of English outside of Trinidad is perceived to have bearing on lexical norms among the respondents. This is especially true for American English, which is felt to affect Trinidadian English through contact with the media and employment opportunities with American companies, reported especially for the use of *zee* (27–28) and *vacation*.

- (27) I remember a long time ago asking my mom about this. Her explanation was that the English pronunciation was Zed, and that Sesame Street had introduced us “young” people to the American Zee. (Female, 32)
- (28) I used to say going on holidays before I started working for American companies. Then it became going on vacation I use the word holiday now for public holidays eg Christmas etc.

## 5 | DISCUSSION

By and large, the findings in the current study confirm the findings of previous works on lexical norms in the Caribbean. In particular, the corpus and questionnaire studies reported here affirm the findings of several earlier studies. Regarding the preference for British variants in *trade union* and *towards* reported in both Deuber et al. (2021) and Hänsel and Deuber (2013), the present study corroborates this finding, and the occurrence of these features in both written and spoken ICE-TT registers suggests that this preference is not limited to the genre of newspaper writing. The current work also affirms the overall preference for American English variants with reference to *cell phone*, *garbage*, *student*, and *principal*, as reported in Deuber and Hänsel (2019) in their study of lexical norms in several Caribbean islands. The present findings thus suggest that Trinidadian English behaves like other Caribbean Englishes in this regard, and strengthens the previous authors claim that ‘beyond the evident American influence, a shared pattern uniting the different Caribbean corpora emerges’ (Deuber & Hänsel, 2019, p. 51).

Previous studies have yielded mixed results for *Math/Maths* and *transportation/transport*. For *transportation/transport* the results of the questionnaire study, in particular, corroborate Hänsel and Deuber’s (2013) finding, since both studies find that *transport* is the more frequent variant. Deuber et al. (2021) report mixed results for Trinidad with regard to the use of *Maths*, but this is not really attested in the current data. Overall, both the questionnaire and the corpus data reveal a slight preference for British *Maths*, with a relatively large proportion (20.8%) of questionnaire respondents reporting using *Math* and *Maths* about equally. It is at this juncture that the current study extends prior conclusions. Though the token counts for both *transportation/transport* (63) and *Maths/Math* (21) are relatively

low, their overall distribution suggests that lexical choice may be affected by register: *Math* and *transport* occur more frequently in written registers despite REGISTER not being a significant predictor overall, with *Maths* and *transportation* dominating spoken registers. This may have been what questionnaire respondents were referring to when making comments such as (29) and (30).

- (29) Many of these options would be dependent on the context and audience. I don't use these words in a strict fashion and usually have to code switch.
- (30) In many of these cases, I have used both words, and it often depends on the audience.

By expanding the scope of the corpus used beyond newspaper language and including all the spoken and written text categories found in ICE, this paper is able to suggest that REGISTER may affect the choice of variant. All the same, the data in the current work is not sufficient to fully substantiate this claim. A larger corpus, or elicitation data, as suggested by Deuber and Hänsel (2019), might be more successful in uncovering more fine-grained details of this type of lexical variation.

Indeed, the current study highlights the importance of using a mixed-methods approach in studying lexical norms, and of using non-traditional forms of data collection. The most obvious evidence of this lies in the use of the questionnaire, which complemented the corpus data substantially from a quantitative perspective, since trends in the corpus data could be confirmed statistically. Moreover, the inclusion of open-ended questions in the choice of 'other,' which participants could then elaborate upon, and asking for further comments provided key aspects of analysis that neither the corpus study nor the quantitative aspects of the questionnaire could account for with regard to semantic differences between some of the pairs and local alternatives to each given pair. These account for a minority of the responses is partially irrelevant: the overall design of the questionnaire steered users to choose one of the options. To insist that only numerically dominant tokens be seriously considered risks misrepresenting the language situation as a whole; all but one of the alternatives provided in comments or under other were attested in the ICE-TT corpus, and in some cases occurred more frequently than the options given. At the same time, the majority of comments were not gathered from the more traditional online questionnaire, but from the Facebook questionnaire. While such a questionnaire design raises issues because respondents are mostly known to the researcher and their answers are not anonymous to other participants and thus potentially affected by others, such an approach also holds promise. While traditionally the ideal questionnaire data is collected independently and anonymously, so that respondents are not affected either by the researcher or the other participants, people do not use language independently and anonymously, and meta-discussions on language are possibly enhanced through interaction with other language users in fora in which all parties feel comfortable sharing, such as social media web platforms.

What the alternative answers and comments from both the traditional and Facebook questionnaires make clear is that lexical norm orientation in Trinidadian English cannot only be understood by looking at the frequencies of British and American tokens in corpora without studying these tokens in the contexts in which they are used. Similar forms may have different connotations in Trinidad, as was seen for *yard* and *garden*, as well as *store* and *shop*. Additionally, studies of lexical norm orientation need to consider vocabulary items that are indigenous to the varieties being studied. This study, like earlier studies, did not consider local variants, and this is a particular weakness since it overlooks the linguistic feature that characterises post-colonial Englishes from their earliest stages of development (Schneider, 2007).

## 6 | CONCLUSION

This paper set out to examine lexical norm orientations in Trinidadian English through the use of the ICE-TT corpus, complemented by survey studies. The data revealed that, in general, American variants are used more frequently in Trinidadian English, though British variants persist in a number of exceptions. In these cases, the data do not suggest



that there is any pending recalibration by speakers towards American norms, and so the overall pattern is one of American influence, rather than Americanization. This paper also sought to find out whether lexical norms differed with age and degree of contact with American English. While there were some instances in which both of these factors were significant predictors of variant use, the general picture painted by the results is one of stability marked by variation. The method applied in the current work failed to consider Trinidadian variants, but the participant responses made it clear that local variants coexist alongside the British and American norms. Further studies on norm orientations in Trinidadian English would do well to consider the role of local norms in larger discussions of multi-normativity. The use of American or British variants does not necessarily mean that word meanings are identical in Trinidad and the United States or the United Kingdom. In a number of cases, both the denotation and the connotation of a form bear uniquely Trinidadian meanings. The extent to which Trinidadian speakers appreciate individual lexical items as British or American is unclear, given the co-existence, and in some cases co-equal use, of these two forms of various lexical items.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Although Trinidad, like Jamaica, is 'difficult to place in the concentric circles' (Kachru, 1992, p. 362), there is scholarly precedent for treating Caribbean Englishes in general as Outer Circle varieties (Suarez-Gomez, 2019), or at least Outer Circle adjacent (Nero, 2006).
- <sup>2</sup> Throughout this paper, the American English variant in pairs will always occur first.
- <sup>3</sup> Includes car park and carpark.
- <sup>4</sup> Includes head master/mistress, headmaster/headmistress.
- <sup>5</sup> Tokens of Miss Annette's Shop were excluded, but references to the shop were included.
- <sup>6</sup> The adjective Chinese (also Chinese, Chiney) in this sense means 'own or run by Chinese people' (Winer, 2009, p. 202). A Chinese shop is a derogatory term for a small establishment, owned by Chinese people, selling basic food items and snacks.
- <sup>7</sup> It has been pointed out that 'go on holidays' is also attested in British English. However, I would argue that is qualitatively different from 'go on holidays' in the Trinidadian sense. The former seems to refer to multiple holidays, whereas the Trinidadian sense refers to a single holiday or vacation, so that when an older relative in (7) says, 'I'm going on holidays in America,' it simply means I am taking a single vacation in America. Furthermore, the fact that respondents provide this as a separate alternative to holiday/vacation suggests that 'go on holidays' is not merely a plural form of 'go on holiday.'
- <sup>8</sup> In the initial questionnaire design, 41–65 years and 65+ years formed two separate groups. However, since the latter group comprised only 23 respondents, they were merged with the younger cohort to form a larger group.

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