

# How has ethnic diversity grown 1991-2001-2011?

## Summary

**This briefing uses recently published data from the 2011 Census to show change in the ethnic diversity of England and Wales since 1991. We find that:**

- In 2011, one-in-five people (20%) identified with an ethnic group other than White British compared with 13% in 2001.
- The population with ethnic background other than White (White British, White Irish and White Other) has doubled in size since 1991 from 3 to 7 million, while remaining a minority of the total population (14%).
- The African ethnic group has grown faster than any other minority group in the last two decades, doubling in each decade to reach 990,000 in 2011.
- There has been continued ethnic group mixing within families and neighbourhoods. The number of people identifying with a 'Mixed' ethnic category has increased by almost a half since 2001 to more than a million.
- The 'Other' ethnic group categories – 'White Other', 'Other Black', 'Other Asian', 'Other Mixed' and 'Other' have all increased, in total by over 2 million in the last 10 years. The existing ethnic group categories are, perhaps, becoming increasingly less meaningful for many people.

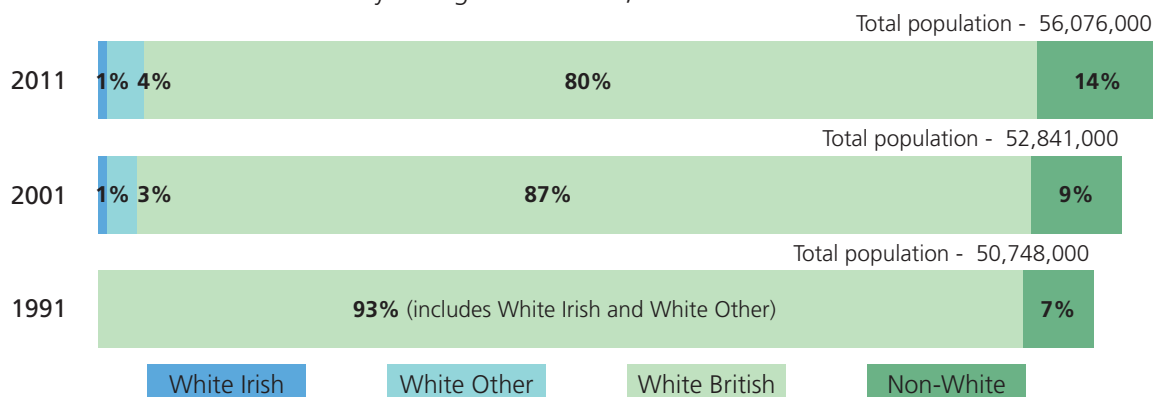
- The residential areas with the greatest growth of ethnic minority groups are those areas where they were fewest in 2001, particularly in parts of East Anglia.
- Ethnic minority groups remain clustered in certain diverse urban areas. In most Inner London Boroughs, and in Slough, Luton and Leicester no one ethnic group accounts for the majority of the population.

## Growth of ethnic diversity

In 2011, the ethnic group population other than White British accounted for 20% (or 11 million) of the population of England and Wales compared with 14% (or 7 million) in 2001 (see Figure 1). Despite this growth, the White British ethnic group represents the majority (80%) of the population. The total ethnic group population other than White has more than doubled in size since 1991, from 3 million (or 7%) to almost 8 million (or 14%). The White population remained static in total size between 1991 and 2001, and increased marginally between 2001 and 2011. The White British population, measured separately for the first time in 2001, declined by 1% between 2001 and 2011, whereas the White Irish population decreased by 18%.

Among the population other than White British or Irish there is diversity of ethnic groups. This diverse range of

**Figure 1.** Growth of ethnic diversity in England & Wales, 1991-2001-2011



**Notes:** White Irish includes White Gypsy and Irish Traveller in 2011 (57,680 people).  
Figures may not add due to rounding.

[Click here for Figure 1 data in Excel](#)

ethnic groups have contributed to the majority of the increase in the population of England and Wales over the last 20 years. Those which have experienced the greatest increase since 1991 are the African, Chinese, Bangladeshi and Pakistani ethnic groups (see Figure 2). Their growth is partly a result of their youthful populations who are of the ages likely to have children and therefore experience more births than deaths. This natural change is the main source of growth for the Bangladeshi and Pakistani ethnic groups<sup>1</sup>. Continued immigration is another reason for ethnic minority population growth, and this has been the case for the growth of the African and Chinese ethnic groups in the past two decades.

Since 2001, the African and Mixed ethnic groups have grown faster than most other ethnic minority groups. The African ethnic group doubled in size during the 2000s to almost a million although still only accounts for less than 2% of the total population. An indicator of the increased mixing of British society across ethnic groups is the growth of the 'Mixed' ethnic identity population. This represents the most intimate form of mixing, when a person has parents of different ethnic groups. Mixed groups as a whole increased by more than 80% during the 2000s and now include more than a million people (see Figure 2).

The largest increase in total size of any ethnic group during the 2000s was, however, the Other White population, which increased from 1.4 million in 2001 to almost 2.5

## Census ethnic group question

Ever since 1991, the UK Census has included a question on ethnicity. But collecting data on ethnicity is a challenge, because ethnic identity means different things to different people. Ethnicity is multifaceted and fluid, which makes it difficult to compare over time. The census question has evolved in terms of how it is framed and the pre-defined response categories that most people are expected to fill. Back in 1991, the census asked 'which ethnic group do you descend from: White; Black-Caribbean; Black-African; Black-Other; Indian; Pakistani; Bangladeshi and Chinese.' But in 2001, it asked about 'your ethnic group in terms of cultural background.' There were additional pre-defined categories of Mixed and White Irish in 2001 as well as an 'Other' category for each broad group of White, Mixed, Asian and Black. The 2011 question, however, simply asked about 'your ethnic group or background' and there were categories added for White Gypsy or Irish Traveller and Arab. The changes in the phrasing on the question restrict comparison across censuses. More information on comparing ethnic group population over time is available on our [website](#).

**Figure 2.** Growth in ethnic minority group population in England & Wales, 1991-2001-2011



Notes: There are no Mixed categories in 1991; and no Arab category in 1991 & 2001. Excludes White Irish and White Other categories shown in Figure 1.

[Click here for Figure 2 data in Excel](#)

million in 2011, a rise of 80%. There has also been a large growth in the Other Asian (238%) and Other Black (186%) populations. Despite adding more ethnic groups in 2011, many people did not find a category on the census form that fits them very well. Are more categories required to ensure there are meaningful ethnic groups that everyone can identify with?

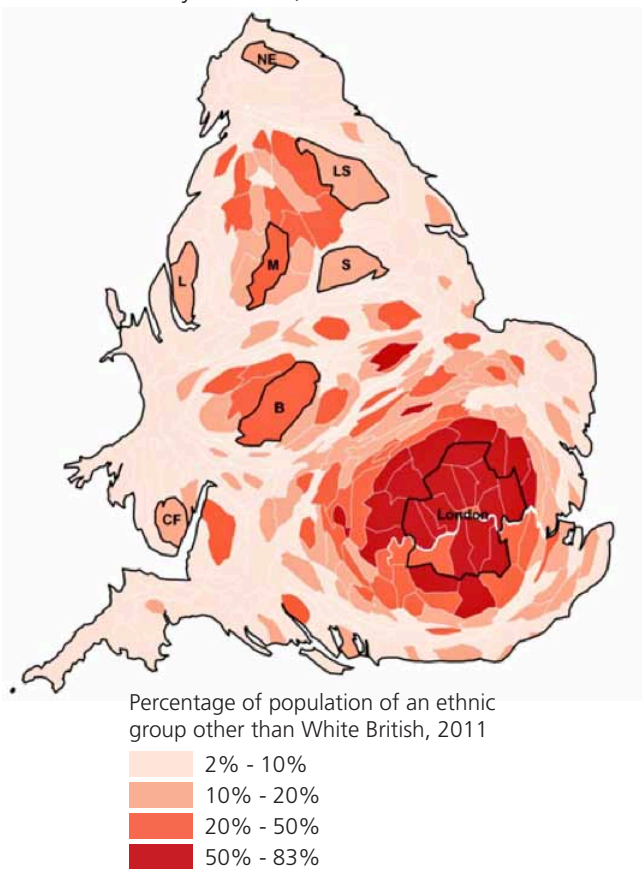
## Geographical spreading of ethnic diversity

More than half of the population in inner London Boroughs, with the exception of the City of London and Wandsworth, identify with an ethnic identity other than White British. However, in these diverse districts, no one ethnic group is in the majority. There are similarly diverse towns and cities outside London, including Slough, Luton and Leicester. Although the ethnic minority population remains clustered in towns and cities where they or their ancestors initially settled, clear indications of residential mixing can be

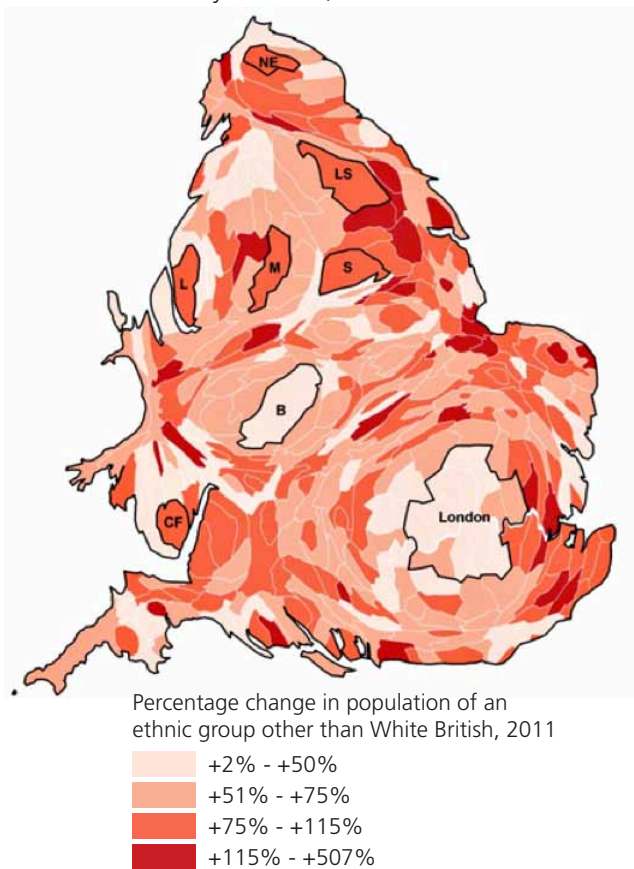
observed since 1991<sup>2</sup>. Figure 3 maps the clustering of the population other than White British in 2011 and the percentage change 2001-2011 in each Local Authority District in England and Wales.

As a consequence of the clustering in urban areas, the ethnic minority population is underrepresented in the majority of rural England and Wales. But just as is the case for the White population, the direction of residential movement of most ethnic minority groups is towards suburban and rural areas. The greatest relative growth in the ethnic minority population is in rural parts of England and Wales, which is where they were fewest in 2001. In Boston and South Holland districts, the population other than White British increased by at least three-fold during the 2000s. There is, to some extent, an inverse pattern of ethnic minority growth and ethnic minority clustering. The towns and cities of highest clustering are experiencing the smallest relative growth in the ethnic minority population.

**Figure 3a.** Ethnic diversity in Local Authority Districts, 2011



**Figure 3b.** Change in ethnic diversity in Local Authority Districts, 2001-2011



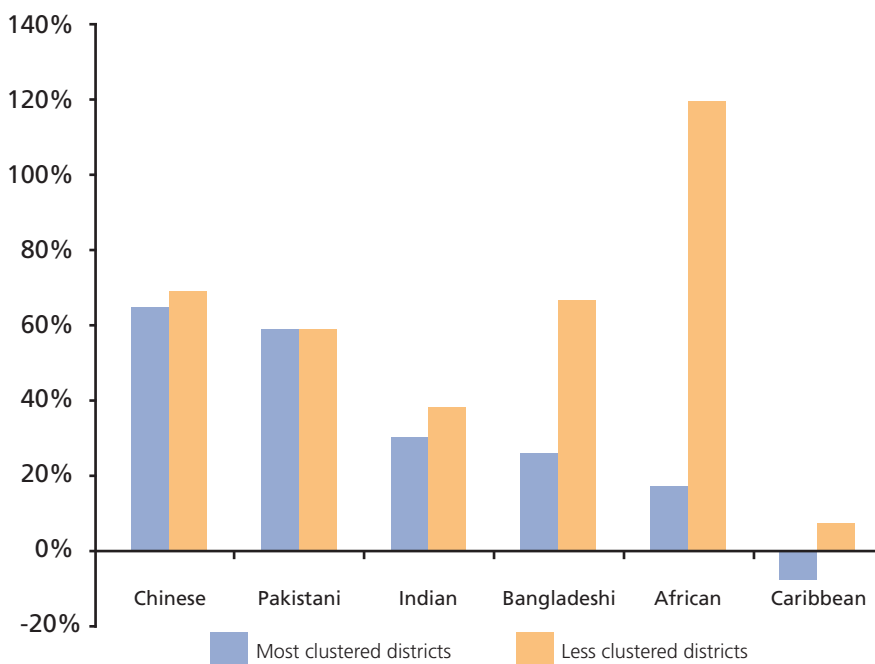
[Click here for Figure 3 data in Excel](#)

**Notes:** These maps are population cartograms where each local authority district is shown approximately proportional in size to its resident population<sup>4</sup>. The highlighted areas are intended to act as reference points: Inner London and other principal cities: Manchester (M), Liverpool (L), Sheffield (S), Newcastle upon Tyne (NE), Birmingham (B), Leeds (LS), and Cardiff (CF). For a more detailed key of each local authority district click [here](#).

Increased residential spreading is also shown in Figure 4, which highlights the percentage change in the population (2001-2011) of selected ethnic groups in the districts where they were most clustered (those that contained a fifth of the population of each ethnic group in 2001), and the percentage change in the population of each ethnic group in all other districts. There is a pattern of greater population growth for each ethnic group in those districts where they

are less clustered compared with a smaller or negative change in the most clustered districts for each group, except Pakistani where the difference is very small. This presents a clear pattern of the increased residential diversity in areas where ethnic minority groups have historically been less clustered. It is due to movement away from urban areas where they are clustered, and immigration to areas where there was less immigration before.

**Figure 4.** Growth in population by selected ethnic groups in the districts where each group is most clustered, and everywhere else, 2001-2011



**Notes:** The 'most clustered districts' for each ethnic group include a fifth of an ethnic group's population in 2001 with highest percentage of the group, and the 'less clustered districts' include the remaining four-fifths. The most clustered districts are as follows for each group:

**Chinese:** Barnet, Cambridge, Camden, City of London, Islington, Kensington and Chelsea, Kingston upon Thames, Lewisham, Manchester, Merton, Oxford, Southwark, Tower Hamlets, Westminster

**Pakistani:** Bradford, Pendle, Slough

**Indian:** Brent, Harrow, Hounslow, Leicester

**Bangladeshi:** Tower Hamlets

**African:** Hackney, Newham, Southwark

**Caribbean:** Brent, Hackney, Lambeth, Lewisham

[Click here for Figure 4 data in Excel](#)

### Incompleteness of ethnic group data 1991-2001

Non-response (undercount) is thought to have been well-estimated within the 2011 Census, but incompletely estimated in 1991 and 2001. Non-response is concentrated in some ethnic groups. If this bias is not taken into account, comparisons of population can be misleading. In this briefing we have used the complete estimates for 1991 and 2001 available from the UK Data Archive<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Finney, N., & Simpson, L. (2009) 'Population dynamics: the roles of natural change and migration in producing the ethnic mosaic' *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 9, 1479-1496.

<sup>2</sup> Simpson, L. (2007) Ghettos of the mind: the empirical behaviour of indices of segregation and diversity, *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, Series A, Statistics in Society*, Vol. 170, 405-424.

<sup>3</sup> Sabater, A., & Simpson, L. (2009) Enhancing the Population Census: A Time Series for Sub-National Areas with Age, Sex, and Ethnic Group Dimensions in England and Wales, 1991-2001. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 9, 1461-1477.

<sup>4</sup> Dorling, D., & Thomas, B. (2011) *Bankrupt Britain: An Atlas of Social Change*, Bristol: Policy Press.

Sources: the 1991, 2001 and 2011 Censuses (Crown Copyright), and complete population estimates based on them. Map base for this Briefing kindly provided by Bethan Thomas.

This briefing is one in a series, *The Dynamics of Diversity: evidence from the 2011 Census*.

**Author:** Stephen Jivraj

**Centre on Dynamics of Ethnicity (CoDE)**

The University of Manchester  
Oxford Road, Manchester  
M13 9PL, UK

email: [censusbriefings@ethnicity.ac.uk](mailto:censusbriefings@ethnicity.ac.uk)

[www.ethnicity.ac.uk](http://www.ethnicity.ac.uk)

