



Ethnicity in London

London is undoubtedly the most cosmopolitan city in Europe. Some commentators go further and view London as the most multiracial city in the world. The diverse **ethnicity** of the capital is exemplified by the fact that over 200 languages are spoken within its boundaries. The lobby group Migration Watch estimate that two-thirds of immigration into Britain since the mid-1990s has been into London. Within the UK the process of **racial assimilation** is much more advanced in London than anywhere else.

- Almost 30% of people in London were born outside the UK compared with 2.9% in the North East.
- In 2000, 6% of all new solicitors in London were black or Asian, and a third of London's doctors are now non-white.
- London has the highest proportion of each ethnic minority group apart from Pakistanis and Indians.

Just over 50% of London's population described themselves as white British in the 2001 census. A further 14% are either white Irish or white Other [Europeans, Americans, Australians, New Zealanders etc.] There are now more ethnically African residents [8%] in London than black Caribbean. The largest Asian community is Bangladeshi [5%]. The 2001 census provided the first ever figures for mixed-race.

Key Terms

Ethnicity: the identification of individuals with particular ethnic groups.

Ethnic segregation: the clustering together of people with similar ethnic or cultural characteristics into separate residential areas which are increasingly referred to as **ethnic villages**.

Integrationist communities: communities where a variety of ethnic groups intermix spatially and socially.

Racial assimilation: the gradual process of integration into the mainstream community. This process has three main strands which are broadly in chronological order: economic, social and political.

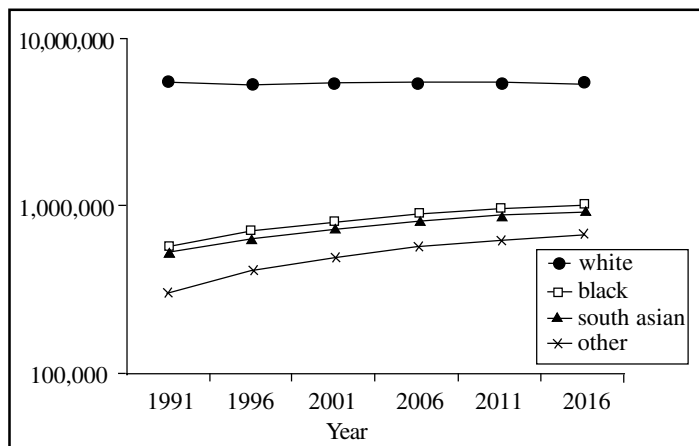
Urban mosaic: the complex pattern of different residential areas within a city reflecting variations in socio-economic status which are mainly attributable to income and ethnicity.

Ethnic groups are:

- distinct groups that are smaller than the dominant group in their society
- groups whose members share cultural traditions, values and a common language
- groups whose members recognise themselves as a separate group and are recognised as such by others in society.

London's non-white population, 28.8% of the capital's total, is the largest of any European city. Demographers at the Greater London Authority predict that, due to continuing immigration, this will rise to a third of London's population within the next ten years (Fig 1).

Fig 1. Projected growth by ethnic group (1991 - 2016)



London is the destination for most of Britain's 185,000 new immigrants each year. The biggest growth will be in London's Asian communities, which still have relatively large families, and also black Africans, due mainly to migration. It is also likely that the number of British-born children of Afro-Caribbean and mixed parentage will increase at a significant rate.

Fig 2 shows that as international migration into London has increased, so has internal migration out of London. This is a trend that is also occurring in many other large cities in MEDCs. The pull of London to international migrants now exceeds that of the largest US cities (Fig 3).

Fig 2. Internal - international migration

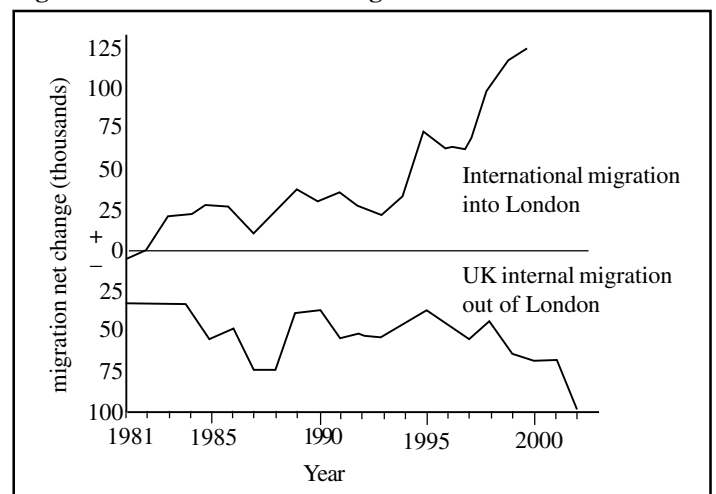
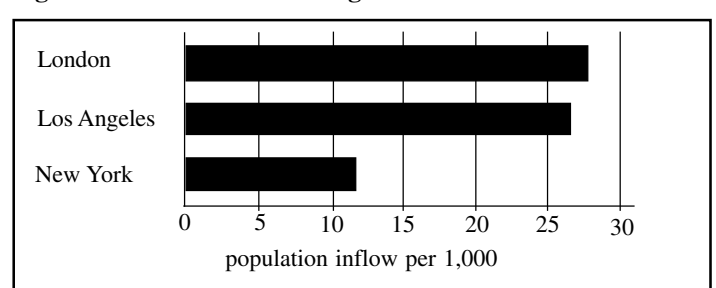


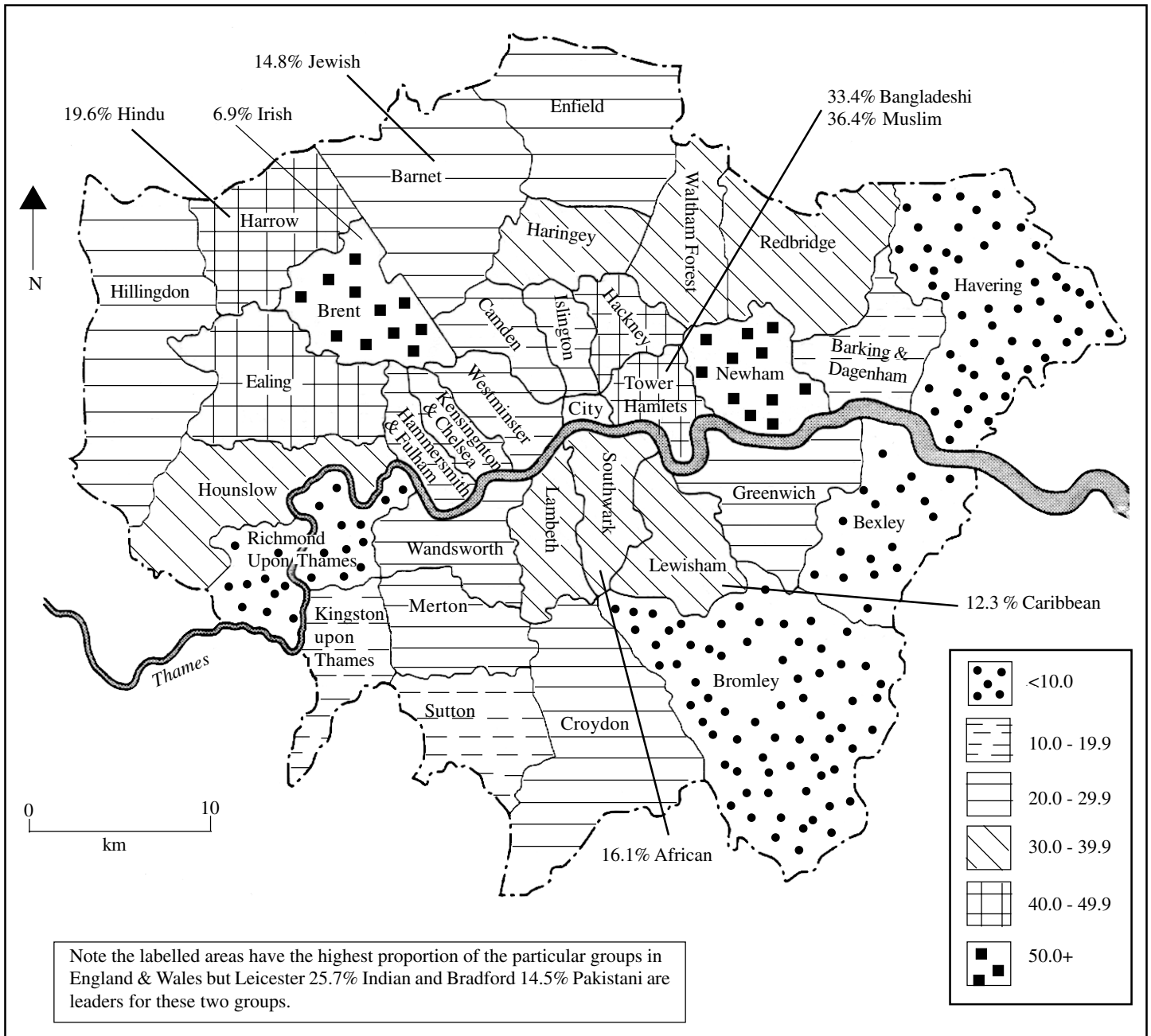
Fig 3. London international migration



Spatial Distribution

Fig 4 shows the distribution of the non-white ethnic group population according to the 2001 census.

Fig 4. Percentage population non-white ethnic group (2001)



This does not conform to the clear high ethnic minority inner city/ low ethnic minority suburban contrast evident in so many other cities in the developed world. Certainly a number of boroughs fit this model, for example the outer suburban arc from Havering in the north east to Richmond upon Thames in the south west. Apart from Croydon, all the boroughs in this arc have non-white ethnic group population below 20%. Also strongly following expectations are Lambeth, Southwark, Lewisham, Tower Hamlets and Hackney - a group of inner city boroughs that are all above 30% on the same measure.

However, on the other side of the coin the two boroughs with the highest % population non-white [Newham and Brent] are classed as outer London boroughs.

Two other outer London boroughs, Ealing and Harrow, have figures in excess of 40% with Hounslow, Haringey, Waltham Forest and Redbridge exceeding the 30% mark. A much more complicated picture still would be presented by examining figures at ward and enumeration district levels where the concept of the **urban mosaic** really becomes apparent. For example in Tower Hamlets, the Bangladeshi population ranges from 58.1% in the ward of Spitalfields and Banglatown to 10% in the Bow East ward. Detailed analysis of census data shows that the ethnic Asian population lives in wards with higher levels of ethnic minority concentration than the Black population.

Note that the highest proportion of most ethnic groups, and most religious groups, can be found in one London borough or another

London: Immigration Timechart

Over its long history London has been an important centre for the settlement of immigrants and refugees:

- The Romans established the first town of London around AD50. As London grew in importance as a trading port, people arrived from all parts of the Roman Empire, particularly from Italy, Greece, France and Germany.
- Four main groups of people lived in and around London between the 7th and 11th centuries – the existing population of Romanised Britons and the newcomers: the Anglo-Saxons, Scandinavians and Norman French. The latter were the last armed invaders.
- Many people from the rest of Europe settled in medieval London [1066-1485]. Foreign merchants controlled much of London's overseas trade and many London crafts and industries were further developed by skilled craftworkers from abroad.
- The Tudor period [1485-1603] witnessed a growing black presence in the capital. Some came freely, but from the 1570s the slave trade resulted in Africans brought against their will. London also became a refuge for many Protestants suffering persecution abroad after Henry VIII's split with the Catholic Church.
- In 1656 Jewish people were allowed to resettle in London for the first time since 1290. When the monarchy was restored in 1660, Charles II encouraged Dutch merchants to settle in London. During this period, owning a black or Asian servant became fashionable among the wealthy. In the 1680s many French Protestants [Huguenots] fled to London from religious persecution in France. From 1689, William III brought in Dutch financiers who helped develop the financial services offered by London.
- By the mid-18th century a significant black population as well as a smaller south Asian community had developed. The Jewish and Huguenot communities diversified, a German community developed, and the long-established Irish community grew in size.
- The developments in infrastructure in the early and mid-19th century provided employment for many nationalities, but particularly from Ireland. Smaller communities included the Italian quarter in Clerkenwell and the cosmopolitan area around the port.
- In the closing decades of the 19th century the East End became home to Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe, as well as to a small Chinese community. Many black and Asian people entered Britain freely as subjects of the British Empire. The German and Italian populations also increased in number as the capital's economy expanded.
- In 1905 the Aliens Act was passed to stop further Jewish settlement. This was the first major piece of modern immigration legislation. People from various parts of the Empire continued to come to London in the early part of the 20th century. Among other groups, Cypriots settled in the West End in the 1920s and 1930s. During the Second World War London became the focus for German, Polish, French and central European refugees.
- The post-war labour shortage was first filled by workers from Europe. Then followed a period of active recruitment from the Indian subcontinent and the West Indies which then slowed to a trickle after 1962. Since then British subjects fleeing political conflict, have come to London, such as the Asians expelled from East Africa and Cypriots displaced by the Turkish invasion. In addition, refugees from many other parts of the world have arrived in London.

Fig 5 shows the distribution of main ethnic groups by London borough in 2001 taken from the neighbourhood statistics published on-line by National Statistics. In seven boroughs the population is 20% or more Asian or Asian British. The Black and Black British population reaches this figure [including Brent at 19.9%] in seven boroughs also. Only in Newham and Brent do the main concentrations of these groups coincide.

Fig 5. Ethnic group by London borough: Census 2001

Borough	% Asian or Asian British	% Black or Black British	% Mixed Race	% Chinese or Other Ethnic Group
Barking & Dagenham	5.0	7.0	1.9	0.9
Barnet	12.3	6.0	3.0	4.6
Bexley	3.4	2.9	1.3	1.0
Brent	27.7	19.9	3.7	3.4
Bromley	2.6	2.9	1.9	1.1
Camden	10.4	8.3	3.8	4.4
Croydon	11.3	13.3	3.7	1.5
Ealing	24.6	8.8	3.6	4.3
Enfield	7.8	10.4	3.0	1.7
Greenwich	6.8	2.9	1.3	1.0
Hackney	8.6	24.7	4.2	3.2
Hammersmith & Fulham	4.4	11.1	3.8	2.8
Haringey	6.7	20.0	4.6	3.1
Harrow	29.6	6.1	2.8	2.6
Havering	1.8	1.4	1.0	0.6
Hillingdon	13.6	3.3	2.3	1.7
Hounslow	24.7	4.4	3.0	3.0
Islington	5.4	11.9	4.1	3.3
Kensington & Chelsea	4.9	7.0	4.1	5.5
Kingston upon Thames	7.8	1.6	2.3	3.9
Lambeth	4.6	25.8	4.8	2.4
Lewisham	3.8	23.4	4.2	2.7
Merton	11.1	7.8	3.1	3.0
Newham	32.5	21.6	3.4	3.1
Redbridge	25.0	7.6	2.4	1.5
Richmond upon Thames	3.9	0.9	2.2	2.0
Southwark	4.1	25.9	3.7	3.3
Sutton	4.7	2.6	2.1	1.4
Tower Hamlet	36.6	6.5	2.5	3.0
Waltham Forest	14.8	15.4	3.6	1.8
Wandsworth	6.9	9.6	3.4	2.1
Westminster	8.9	7.4	4.1	6.4

Factors affecting concentration

A range of factors affect ethnic concentration:

- there is a tendency for more recent immigrants to live in wards with a high ethnic minority concentration
- those who are not fluent in English are more likely to live in areas with a high ethnic minority concentration
- those in the highest social classes live in areas with a lower concentration of ethnic minority communities
- higher levels of qualification are also associated with lower levels of ethnic minority concentration
- the more paid workers there are in a household, the less likely they are to live in areas with a high concentration of ethnic minority population.

Ethnic Villages

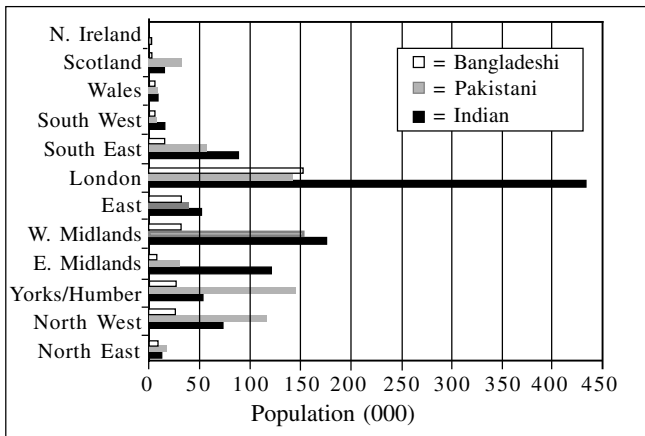
The concept of ethnic villages often appears in newspapers, magazines and academic journals. Ethnic villages to a greater or lesser extent show clear evidence of the groups residing within their areas in terms of shops, places of worship, schools, cinemas, newspapers, social facilities, advertising and of course street presence. For example, the German school in Richmond and the nearby German bakery, the only one in London, have become key reference points for the capital's German community. The French Lycee [a school] in Kensington assumes a similar role. The UK is home to the second largest expatriate French population after the USA, with a very significant proportion of this group living in London. Evidence of the presence of larger and non-white ethnic groups is of course much more obvious.

Case Study: [South] Asians in London

The term Asian or 'South Asian' refers to peoples with ethnic origins from the Indian subcontinent [India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka].

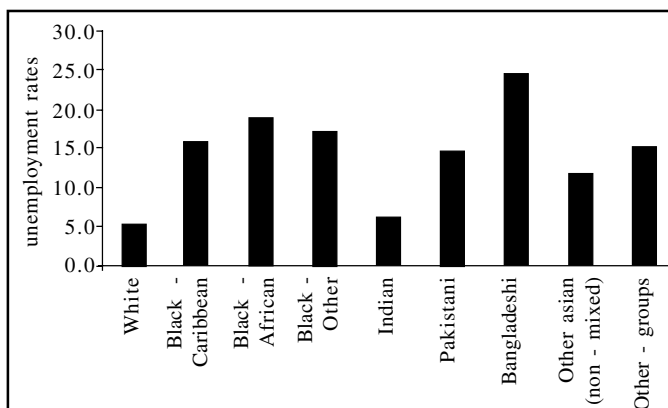
- 35% of all Asians in the UK live in the London area [Fig 6]

Fig 6. UK distribution of Asian community



- 54% of all Bangladeshis live in London, 41% of Indians, but only 19% of Pakistanis
- There are approximately three Indians to every one Pakistani or Bangladeshi living in London.
- The Indian communities are concentrated in the boroughs of Ealing, Brent and Harrow; Pakistani communities in Walthamstow, Newham and Ealing; and Bangladeshis in Tower Hamlets, Newham and Camden.
- London has the largest concentration of Indians in the country [437,000].
- More than half of all Bangladeshis live in London. The unemployment rate for Bangladeshis is considerably higher than for any other group in London [Fig 9].

Fig 7. Unemployment - ethnic group (greater London)



- The London Pakistani community [142,000] is only the third largest in the UK, after the West Midlands [155,000] and Yorkshire and Humberside [146,000].
- Southall and surrounding districts contain the largest Sikh community in the world outside the Punjab in India. Three weekly Punjabi newspapers are published here.

From the 17th century, Indian domestics, servants and nannies [ayahs] began to be brought to London and elsewhere in the U.K, in the service of East India Company agents and British families returning from India. Some were returned home when no longer required but others remained, residing mainly in Aldgate and later Hackney. Indian sailors [the lascars], first recruited to fill the manpower gap caused by the death or desertion of British sailors in India, crewed the Company's East Indiamen, and later, as an all-lascar labour force, the steam-powered liners such as P&O and Clan Line. Although transients, a number jumped ship in British ports. By the mid-nineteenth century small communities of Indian seamen settled near the London docks in Stepney, and later in Poplar and Canning Town. As the opportunities for sea work decreased, many became traders in the nearby market areas of Wentworth Street and Petticoat Lane.

The 1920s witnessed the arrival of Indian professionals and students in London, along with a number of single Sikh males from the Punjab. It was at this time that Indian restaurants began to appear, the first one opening in Leicester Square. Asian shops and places of worship also began to appear during the inter-war period.

The turmoil that surrounded Indian Independence and the partition that led to the state of Pakistan in 1947 resulted in considerable migration to London. The newcomers included doctors, teachers, ex-Army officers and farmers. Some found employment in their specialist areas but most had to settle for jobs in London where labour shortages existed. Thus, many settled in Southall and other industrial areas where factories were short of labour. Thus, there is a strong correlation between initial ethnic communities and large industrial areas with a high demand for unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled labour.

During the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s, Indian people arrived in London not just from India but from other countries such as Uganda, Kenya, the Caribbean and Fiji, frequently responding to very strong push factors, for example the expulsion of Asians from Uganda under the regime of Idi Amin. Migration from the Indian sub-continent continued in the following decades with a considerable emphasis on the extended families of those already resident in Britain. The strong emphasis on education in many Asian families has resulted in significant upward mobility for subsequent generations with geographical dispersal into higher income areas. There are now significant Asian communities in wards of relative affluence in London and Asian children represent a considerable group in London's independent schools.

The following list of ethnic villages in London comes from a variety of recent publications including the Economist [09/08/03] and various articles in the London Evening Standard:

- Arabs in Bayswater
- West Indians in Brixton
- Punjabis in Southall
- Bangladeshis in Tower Hamlets
- Algerians and Moroccans in Finsbury Park
- Kosovans and Albanians in Enfield and Newham
- Iraqis in Barnet
- Congolese in Croydon
- Germans in Richmond
- Brazilians in Bayswater
- Turks in Hackney and Haringey
- Chinese in Soho

Examples of Smaller Ethnic Groups

Chinese

There have been Chinese people in London since the late 18th century, with the community concentrated near the docks in Limehouse until the Second World War. Since the 1950s Soho has become the main focus of Chinese presence in the capital. London's Chinese population now numbers more than 60,000 due to immigration not only from China itself but also from Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and Vietnam. Secondary concentrations of Chinese can be found in Lewisham, Camden, Hackney and Lambeth.

South Africans

There were over 18,000 South-African-born Londoners according to the 1991 census. Today the figure is much higher. Areas with above average numbers of South Africans are Wimbledon, Earl's Court, Fulham, St John's Wood, Wood Green, Acton and Willsden. These are primarily young white South Africans with British passports who find economic opportunities better in London than in their homeland.

The Orthodox Jewish Community of Stamford Hill

This traditional Jewish group numbering 16,000 people speak Yiddish as well as English with the men wearing beards, black hats and long black coats. They shelter children from the influence of the media, educating them in around 25 private schools in the Stamford Hill area. Families are generally large, sometimes with 10 or 12 children.

South Koreans

Of the 24,000 or so South Koreans living in Britain, about 20,000 live in London and the adjoining county of Surrey. The South London suburb of New Malden is the firm focus of this community with many businesses, including a Korean college, owned by and catering for the local Korean population. The size of the Korean community has grown dramatically since 1989 when emigration restrictions were eased in South Korea.

Websites

www.thisislondon – a wide range of articles on ethnicity, particularly by Andrew Gimson.

www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001. The Oxford Index of Deprivation 2000 can also be obtained for each London Borough from this website.

Exam Question

- (a) Describe the distribution of ethnic groups in one large urban area you have studied.
- (b) With reference to at least one ethnic group discuss the factors that have influenced geographical distribution.

Guidelines for Answers

- (a) Reference to Figures 4 and 7 should provide the nucleus to this part of the question. Particular mention should be made of the high concentrations of ethnic minorities in some outer London boroughs which is contrary to the familiar high ethnic minority inner city/low ethnic minority suburbs model. Also refer to similarities and contrasts in the concentrations of different groups.
- (b) London's Asian population could be used as the dominant case study, with brief reference to a few other ethnic groups towards the end of your answer. Stress that the Asian community is made up of three main groups –Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis.

Discuss the origins of the Asian community in London from the 17th century onwards. Emphasise the post-Second World War clustering around industrial areas such as Southall where there was a particularly high demand for labour and relatively cheap, low quality housing. Discuss reasons for both concentration and dispersal.

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