



# Ethnicity in Britain

Since the end of World War II, the ethnic population of Great Britain has increased dramatically, although it was not until 1991 that the first question concerning ethnic status appeared in the official census. The ethnic minority population of Great Britain is shown in Table 1 and shows that the Indian population is the largest ethnic minority population, forming 27% of the total ethnic minority population. The next largest group is the Pakistani ethnic minority.

Fig 1. Non-whites as proportion of all residents (%) 1991

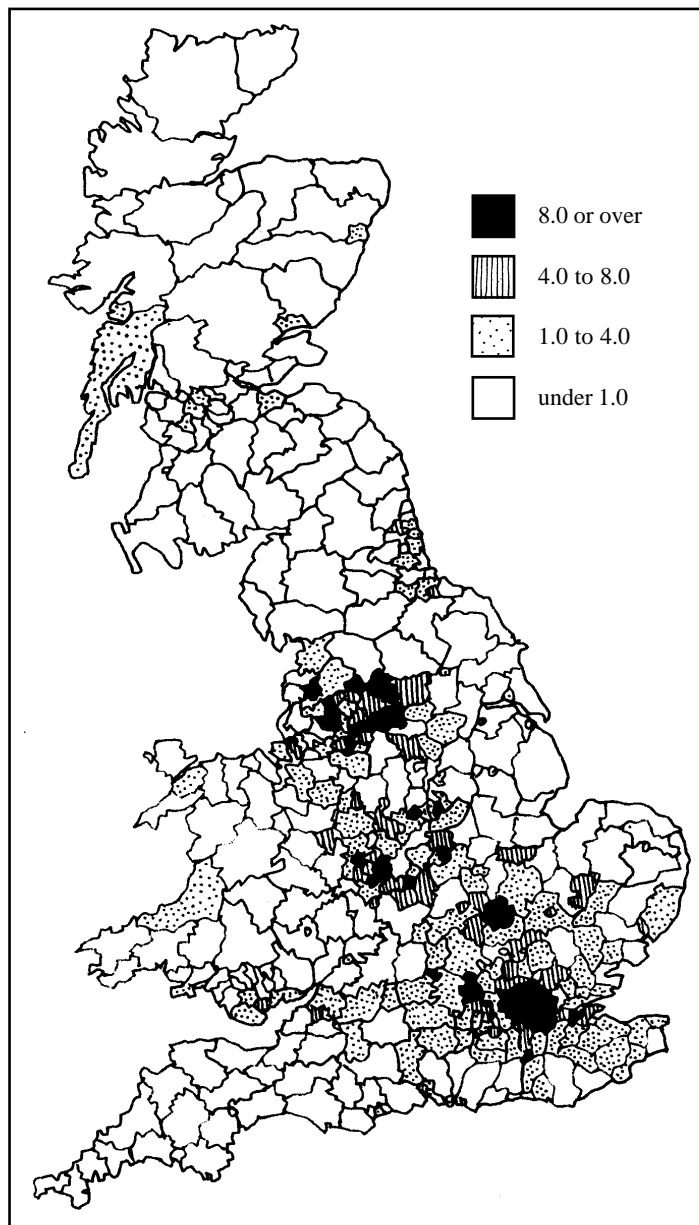


Table 1. Population by ethnic group, 1995/6, Great Britain

Ethnic Group	% of total ethnic minority population	% of total GB population	Numbers (thousands)
Indian	27	1.5	868
Pakistani	17	1.0	554
Bangladeshi	6	0.3	184
Chinese	4	0.2	123
Black-Caribbean	15	0.9	484
Black-African	9	0.5	289
Black-Other (non-mixed)	3	0.2	96
Black-Mixed	5	0.3	147
Others-Asian (non-mixed)	5	0.3	171
Other-Other (non-mixed)	4	0.2	135
Other-Mixed	6	0.4	200
All ethnic minority groups	100	5.8	3251
White		94.2	52903
All ethnic groups*		100.0	56169

The vast majority of ethnic minorities live in urban areas and such ethnic populations usually constitute greater than 5% of the total population of the city. 56% of the ethnic minority population live in the south-east, compared with only 30% of the white population. As Fig 1 shows, the ethnic minority population is concentrated in the former metropolitan counties. This is particularly the case in Greater London, where every ethnic minority population is larger than would be expected if their geographical distribution were uniformly dispersed.

A significant proportion of ethnic minorities are now born in Britain, but in the 1960s and 1970s many ethnic minorities arrived from the former Commonwealth and the pattern of their initial geographical distribution can still be seen. During the 1960s and 1970s, economic growth was rapid along a Birmingham to London axis and it was regions along this axis that attracted the largest ethnic minority populations. Areas from which out-migration occurred, eg. Liverpool and Newcastle, still have relatively low ethnic minority populations. In addition, the textile-dominated towns of Yorkshire, Lancashire and the Midlands also attracted a significant ethnic minority population.

**Exam Hint** - Candidates who intend to answer questions on this topic should ensure that they can provide explanations for clearly stated differences in the distribution of named ethnic minorities. All too often responses are superficial and along the lines of 'ethnic minorities live in the inner city'.

Fig 2a. Indians as proportion of all residents (%) 1991

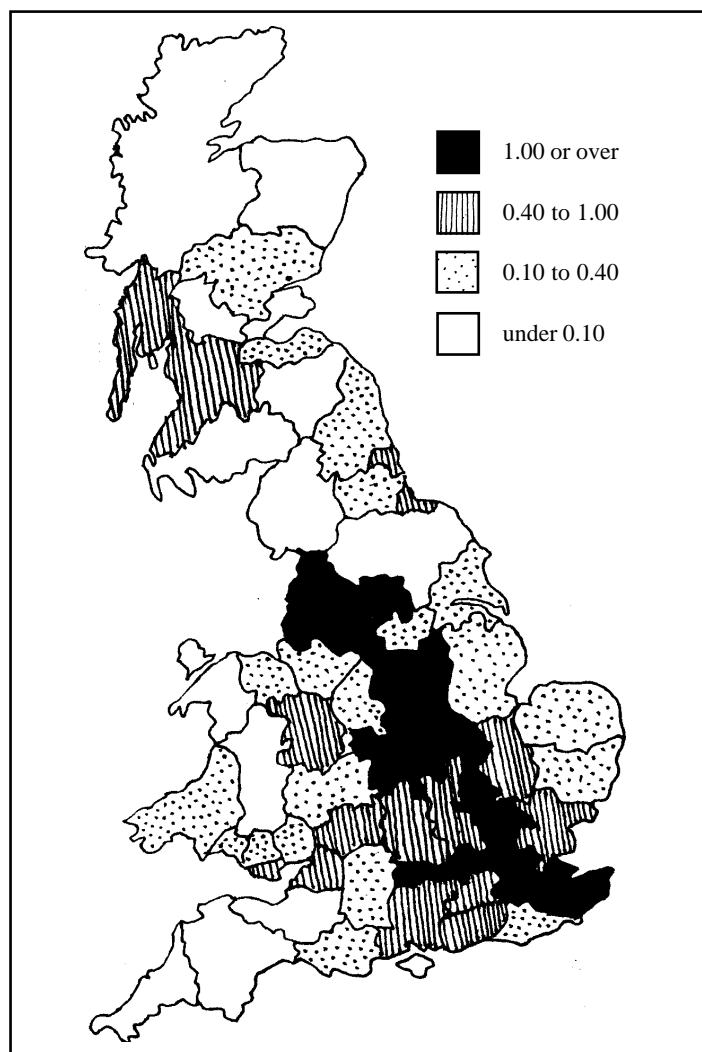
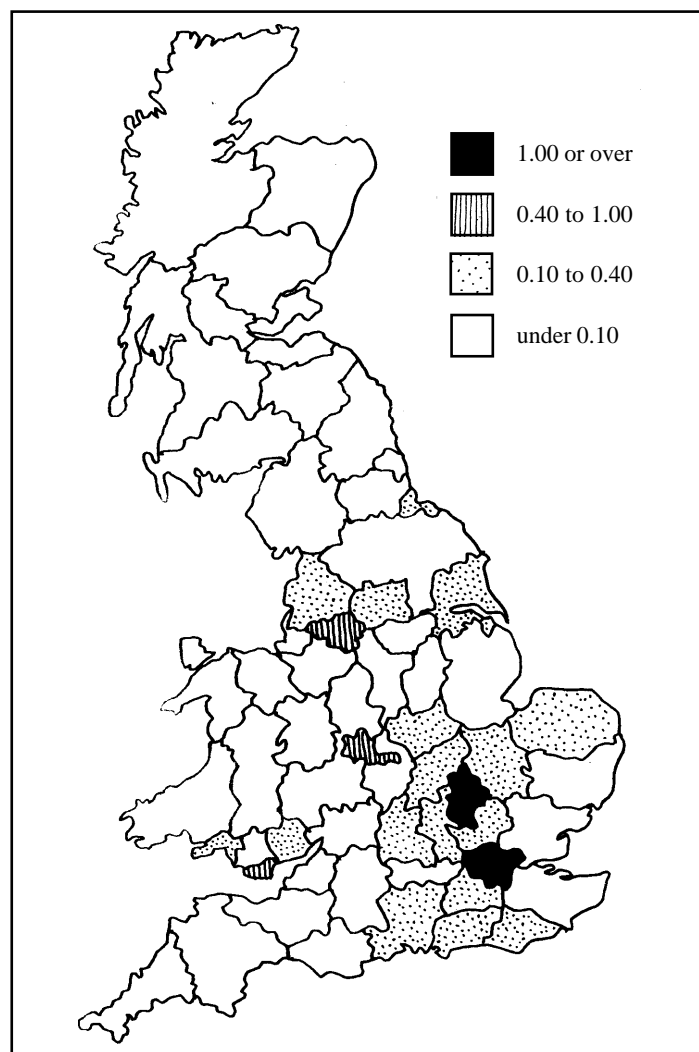


Fig 2b. Bangladeshis as proportion of all residents (%) 1991



Figures 2a and 2b show the geographical distribution of the Indian and Bangladeshi population, for example, and regional concentration is still clearly evident for all the ethnic minority groups. Thus, parts of west Yorkshire (eg. Leeds and Bradford) Lancashire, Birmingham and Greater Manchester have large populations of Pakistani origin whilst large populations of people of Indian origin are found in the east and west Midlands (Leicester, Wolverhampton and Sandwell for example); Large Bangladeshi communities exist in Luton, Oldham and Birmingham.

The 1991 census also clearly indicated ethnic segregation; most white people live in local government wards where the percentage of people from minority ethnic populations is below the national average, whilst the minority ethnic populations tend to live in areas where the minority ethnic population is high. As a result of this spatial segregation, ethnic populations tend to live in areas with very specific characteristics. Most, of course, live in urban areas. Bangladeshi and Black Caribbean groups are concentrated in high-density inner-city areas characterised by low levels of owner-occupation and high levels of unemployment. In contrast, people of Chinese origin are distributed across a wide range of area types - from deprived inner-city areas to much more affluent suburbs. Recent studies have suggested that ethnic populations in northern England (eg. Indian populations in areas such as Blackburn) and particularly Asian populations, experience the greatest social and geographical segregation. In London, despite the fact that single ethnic groups can sometimes constitute more than 75% of the population of an individual ward, the sheer diversity of the ethnic minority population and the lack of insularity in London wards

prevents any particular group from experiencing such segregation and isolation.

### Ethnic segregation

Ethnic segregation occurs as a result of choice and constraint. Ethnic populations may **choose** to live segregated from other ethnic groups. On the other hand, the availability of housing and employment opportunities may force or **constrain** people to live and work in particular areas. Many studies have shown that ethnic minorities are much less successful in securing conventional mortgage loans and this has forced them to take less conventional and more expensive forms of financing which then limits the price of the housing they are able to afford. Estate agents have also acted as '**housing gatekeepers**' by directing potential purchasers into particular areas. The prospect of acquiring an expensive mortgage for a sub-standard house in a deprived area has contributed to the low rate of owner-occupancy amongst black and minority groups.

Ethnic minority populations have also been discriminated against in terms of access to local authority housing and as a result are disproportionately represented. This has led to the development of internal networks where landlords of one ethnic group provide housing for that ethnic group - this has become known as the "**racialisation of residential space**".

**Table 2. Population by ethnic group and age, 1993-96, Great Britain (%)**

Ethnic group	Age				
	0-9	10-19	20-29	30-44	45+
Black-Caribbean	16	12	19	26	27
Black-African	22	13	24	30	10.2
Black-Other (non-mixed)	33	23	19	20	5
Black-Mixed	44	26	14	13	4.3
Indian	16	17	18	27	22
Pakistani	26	24	17	20	13.4
Bangladeshi	28	24	17	18	14.2
Chinese	12	14	23	32	19
Other-Asian (non-mixed)	16	13	17	34	19.6
Other-Other (non-mixed)	20	13	17	33	17.8
Other-Mixed	37	24	16	15	9.6
All ethnic minority groups	21	18	18	25	17.7
White	12	12	15	22	39
All ethnic groups	14	12	15	22	38

**Age profile of ethnic minorities**

The ethnic minority population is, on average, younger than the white population (Table 2).

In particular, Black/Mixed and Other/Mixed groups have a very young age profile. A relatively large percentage of Black Caribbean, Black African and Chinese ethnic groups are aged 25 to 44, but at the older working ages of 45 to 59, the percentages of every ethnic minority population is less than that of the white population. Furthermore, whilst 7% of the white population are aged 75 or over, less than 1% of the entire ethnic minority population is in this category. The median ages for all ethnic minority males and females are the same - 25 years - but, in contrast, the median ages of white males and females are older and show a clear sex difference - 35 for males and 38 for females.

**Ethnic unemployment**

Similar discrimination exists in the labour market. Traditionally, ethnic minority employment has disproportionately centred on low and medium skilled manufacturing industries in urban areas. The nationwide decline in this sector has therefore had greatest impact on minority populations.

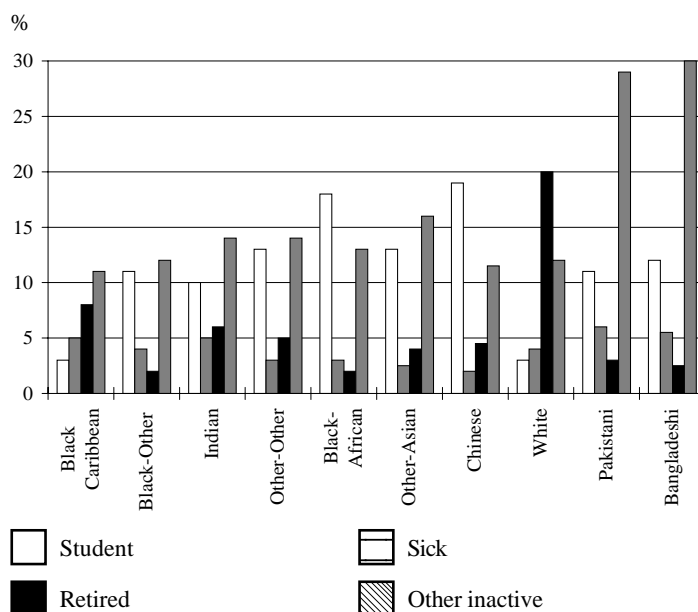
The proportion of people aged 16 and over that is economically inactive is shown in Fig 3. This shows that in 1991, 39% of whites were economically inactive and this figure provides a useful reference point. The ethnic minority groups with the lowest percentage of economically inactive people is the Black Caribbean, whilst over 50% of the Bangladeshi population aged 16 and over were economically inactive. The very high figure for the Bangladeshi group is a consequence of the low employment rate of working-age Bangladeshi women - only one in five Bangladeshi women aged between 16 and 59 were in employment - itself a result of Islamic cultural traditions.

Unemployment rates vary dramatically between the different ethnic groups (Table 3). The key points are:

1. Male unemployment rates are higher in all ethnic minority groups than white **except** Chinese.
2. The rate of unemployment for certain groups, eg. Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are much greater than those of others ethnic groups, eg. Indians.

In some areas, such as Birmingham, the unemployment rate of ethnic minority groups is far higher than that for the corresponding white population and most observers agree that, at least in part, this is a direct consequence of discrimination.

**Fig 3. People aged 16+ not in the labour force, 1991 (%)**



**Table 3. Unemployment rates, Great Britain, 1991 (%)**

Ethnic Group	Men	Women
<b>All Groups</b>	12.6	7.9
White	12.0	7.4
Non-white	22.6	18.4
<b>Black</b>	28.2	19.5
Caribbean	26.6	15.9
African	33.2	29.0
Other	29.5	22.1
<b>South Asian</b>	21.1	19.3
Indian	15.1	14.7
Pakistani	31.1	34.5
Bangladeshi	32.7	42.4
<b>Chinese &amp; Others</b>	17.9	14.6
Chinese	11.9	10.0
Other Asian	17.0	15.5
Other Other	22.3	17.5

**Case Study**  
**Birmingham**

**Table 4. Ethnic groups in Birmingham, 1991**

Ethnic Groups	Population	% of Total
<b>Total Population</b>	961041	100
White	754274	78.5
Black Caribbean	44770	4.7
Black African	2803	0.3
Black Other	8803	0.9
<b>Total Black</b>	56376	5.9
Indian	51075	5.3
Pakistani	66085	6.9
Bangladeshi	12739	1.3
<b>Total South Asian</b>	129899	13.5

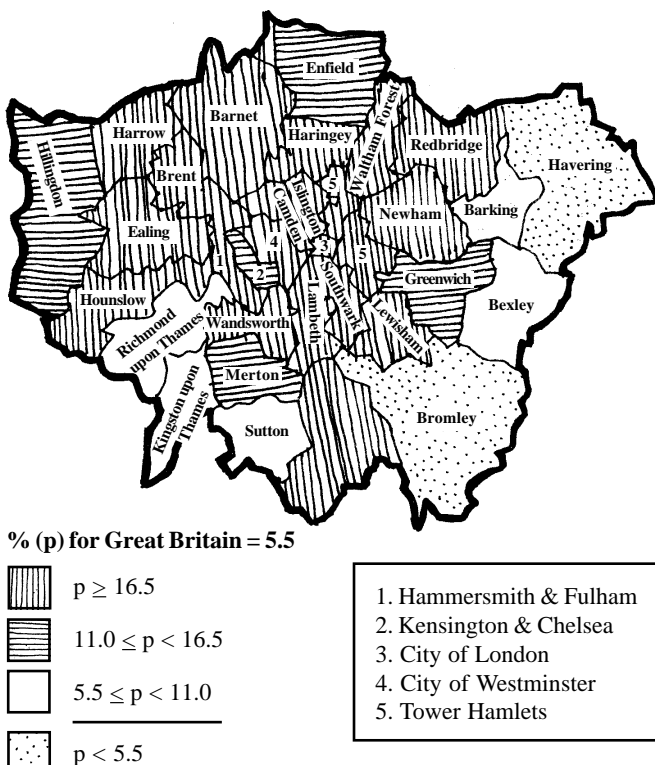
Birmingham has one of the most ethnically diverse populations in Britain. For over 20 years there have been no wards in the City in which there was no "new Commonwealth" population. However, over the last 20 years a number of important trends can be identified:

1. The wide dispersion of the black (Black African, Black Other and Afro-Caribbean) population throughout the city, although the concentration to the north-west of the city (Soho, Aston and Handsworth wards) remains.
2. The concentration of South-Asian populations (Indian, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis) to the north, the east and the south-east of the city centre. A slow dispersion is occurring and, in the majority of cases, such dispersal is to owner-occupied properties in Moseley, Handsworth and Erdington.
3. The relative absence of South-Asian population in the inner ring where the majority of local authority-owned, high-rise housing occurs.

**Case Study**  
**London**

The greatest concentration of ethnic minority groups in Britain occurs in Greater London. The percentage of each ethnic minority which lives in London varies - for example, 60% of blacks, 52% of Bangladeshis but only 18.4% of Pakistanis live in the capital. The proportion of ethnic minority residents in Greater London is shown in Fig 4.

**Fig 4. Ethnic minority population (% of total population) of Greater London**



Two clear trends emerge:

1. That the ethnic minority populations are concentrated in inner-city boroughs.
2. That particular boroughs are usually dominated by one particular ethnic minority group - note that Brent and Newham, with the highest total ethnic minority populations, are exceptions.

The 1991 census revealed concentrations of particular ethnic minority groups in particular districts. The Bangladeshi community, for example, is concentrated in Tower Hamlets where that ethnic group makes up nearly 23% of the total population. In contrast, black ethnic minority groups are concentrated in Hackney, Lambeth and Southwark.

The most concentrated ethnic group is the Indian population of Northcote ward in Ealing which makes up 68% of that ward's population - and a total of 90% of that ward are non-white. The Borough of Brent contains approximately 5% of the British population of Indians, Black Caribbeans and Black Africans. In addition, the white population includes 22,000 Irish-born - the highest percentage of this group in London.

Characteristically, the ethnic groups are concentrated in specific geographical areas within the borough (Table 5).

**Table 5. Ethnic Concentration in Brent**

Asian	Black (African & Caribbean)	Irish
Wembley Central Tokyngton Kingsbury	Roundwood St Raphaels Stonebridge	Cricklewood Kilburn Willesden Green

A significant percentage of each of the ethnic groups were born in the UK. In line with national trends, the age structure of the ethnic minority population is significantly younger than that of the white population.