

Decreasing segregation and increasing integration in England and Wales: what evidence of ‘White flight’?

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What’s been happening to ethnic diversity?

The population of England and Wales has become more diverse, and more mixed. The 2011 Census revealed that the minority population (groups other than White) of England and Wales now constitutes 14% of the total, at around 7.9 million people – an increase of roughly five percentage points from 2001, and a growth of nearly 5 million since 1991. The White British population remains the majority population, at over 80%.

Since 2001 there has been an increase of almost 50% in people reporting themselves as being from a mixed or multiple ethnic group, now at some 1.2 million people. The data also reveal growth in the number of households with multiple ethnic groups, accounting for over 12% of multiple occupancy households in 2011, and with around 6.5% of households of two or more persons living with a spouse or partner from a different ethnic group to their own.

British national identity is commonly expressed. In 2011, 92% of the England and Wales population reported a British identity (the first time a question on national identity was asked). Other survey research has demonstrated a stronger identification with Britishness for the minority than the majority population in the UK.¹

Can England and Wales accommodate increasing diversity?

Some very clear messages have emerged from the 2011 Census results; England and Wales is diversifying, yet it is becoming more integrated. The increase in the proportion of people with a mixed ethnicity reflects an increase in mixed ethnicity partnerships and, subsequently, children. As well as indicating increasing integration in the population it might also reflect a greater confidence in expressing mixed ethnicity, which in itself is expressive of increased tolerance in society.² The rise in the number of households with members of different ethnic groups, through mixed ethnicity marriages and other partnerships, or between generations, reveals the intimate ways in which the population of England and Wales is integrating.

We can also think about how *residential segregation* may have changed over time:

- Previous research has shown that segregation decreased in England and Wales between 1991 and 2001³, and that Britain does not have ‘ghettoes’.⁴
- National level 2011 Census data have shown that segregation has continued to decrease since 2001, but at a more accelerated pace.⁵
- Recently released small area level data have enabled a fine-grained analysis of segregation changes at the neighbourhood (Output Area) level, summed across local authority districts.^{ii,6} This study used the most commonly applied measure of segregation (the Index of Dissimilarity), which indicates the extent to which an ethnic group’s population is spread across neighbourhoods: 0% indicates a completely even spread of the population within that district, and 100% means complete separation.

Some of the core messages from the study are that:

- Neighbourhood residential integration is increasing: segregation has *decreased* within most local authority districts of England and Wales, for all ethnic minority groups.
- There has been increased residential mixing in inner and outer London and major urban centres like Leicester, Birmingham, Manchester and Bradford, for most ethnic groups.
- The most diverse local areas (electoral wards) are located in districts which have seen a decrease in segregation for the majority of ethnic minority groups.

Why might segregation decrease and integration increase for ethnic minority groups? One of the most likely reasons for greater residential mixing is due to migration *within* England and Wales. Cities are attractive to young people, recent immigrants and students. New arrivals to the UK may only stay a short time in one locale, their 'settlement area', before moving elsewhere outside the UK, returning to their country of origin, or moving away from these areas. This latter process of dispersal from ethnically diverse urban areas has been shown to be a process common to all ethnic groups.^{7,8} It is often associated with family migration – a stage in the lifecycle when the suburban or rural residential environment, or developing housing needs, may make such a move attractive or necessary. These housing aspirations are not specific to one ethnic group. Migration from the city to the suburbs (suburbanisation) and to rural areas (counterurbanisation) has been taking place in the UK for several decades. Internal migration data have not yet been released for the 2011 Census, but if these processes will not have ceased, and are suggested by the increasing diversity in rural areas observed since 2001. As well through movement to new areas, segregation can also decrease when individuals and households become more dispersed *within* their existing residential locale. Greater confidence to move to new areas, improved knowledge of housing availability, greater tolerance in society, improved opportunities, or immigration to new areas, may all contribute to the reduction in segregation which has taken place over the last ten years.

What about London? London is an immigrant 'gateway area' and thus will be more diverse; superior services, and well-developed social and institutional networks and support, make London attractive to newcomers. London is not becoming more segregated; inner and outer London have seen increased residential integration since 2001, for most ethnic groups. In outer London, for example, segregation decreased by 12% for the Bangladeshi ethnic group and 11% for the Chinese ethnic group. Dollis Hill in Brent and Plaistow North in Newham are the most diverse electoral wards in all of England and Wales, yet they are located in districts which have seen a decrease in segregation for nearly all ethnic groups.⁶ There is a higher proportion of household mixing in London, too; thus diverse areas cannot be seen as segregated, or becoming more so.

What is happening to segregation for the White British population? There is increased residential mixing between the White British and ethnic minority groups and, while White British segregation has increased slightly in many districts, these increases in segregation tend to be very small (less than 5% in many districts)⁶. Segregation remains low for this group; the White British group is large and evenly spread throughout most districts. The measurement of segregation is complex, but, put simply, the small increase in segregation for the White British group is a function of the *decreasing* segregation of ethnic minority groups, which have considerably smaller populations in most districts in England and Wales – as more groups share the residential space in an area, the smaller groups will become more evenly spread, while the larger group will appear less evenly spread. In reality, what is happening is increased residential *mixing* between the White British population and other ethnic groups.

Is the White British group becoming more isolated from the rest of the population? Another commonly used measure of segregation is the index of exposure, which tells us about how likely individuals identifying with a particular ethnic group (e.g., White British) may be to encounter members of another ethnic group. The White British population has traditionally been more isolated than other ethnic groups, but this groups' exposure to other groups has *increased* between 2001 and 2011.

Is there evidence of 'White flight'?

The short answer to this question is that we do not yet have any (internal) migration statistics from the 2011 Census which tell us about the nature of ethnic group-specific population movement. The last Census showed us that migration from diverse immigrant settlement areas was taking place for all ethnic groups, and that an economic-specific stream of movement was identifiable, rather than one which was ethnic group-specific, or racially-motivated⁷. Those who have the economic resources to move may choose a lifestyle in the suburbs or countryside; for a bigger house, a garden, or a quieter environment. This suburbanisation and counterurbanisation may be better described as 'affluent flight', given that it is not ethnic-group specific. Gentrification has been known to drive out working class communities from certain inner city areas, in London and elsewhere; as with suburban or rural migration, this stream of out-migration will be related to one's socio-economic status.

What are the facts about White British population loss?

The White British population has remained by far the largest group in England and Wales, but has been in decline in the 2000s. The population of an area, for example London, can decrease via three main components of population change; (i) *internal migration* away from that place, to elsewhere in the country; (ii) through *emigration* to a different country, or (iii) through more *deaths than births*. The UK is home to an ageing White British population, and so mortality is likely to be an important factor in explaining population decline by this group.

Proponents of ‘White flight’ would argue that there has been White British population loss from more ethnically diverse urban areas, leading to gains in more ‘homogenous’ suburban and rural areas. Therefore, in order to better understand what *types* of areas are gaining and losing their White British populations, England and Wales has been divided up using an area classification scheme, based on common socio-economic and demographic characteristics and administrative status.⁹ Local authorities have been grouped together as inner London, outer London, metropolitan areas, other large cities, other urban, mixed urban-rural, and mainly rural.¹⁰

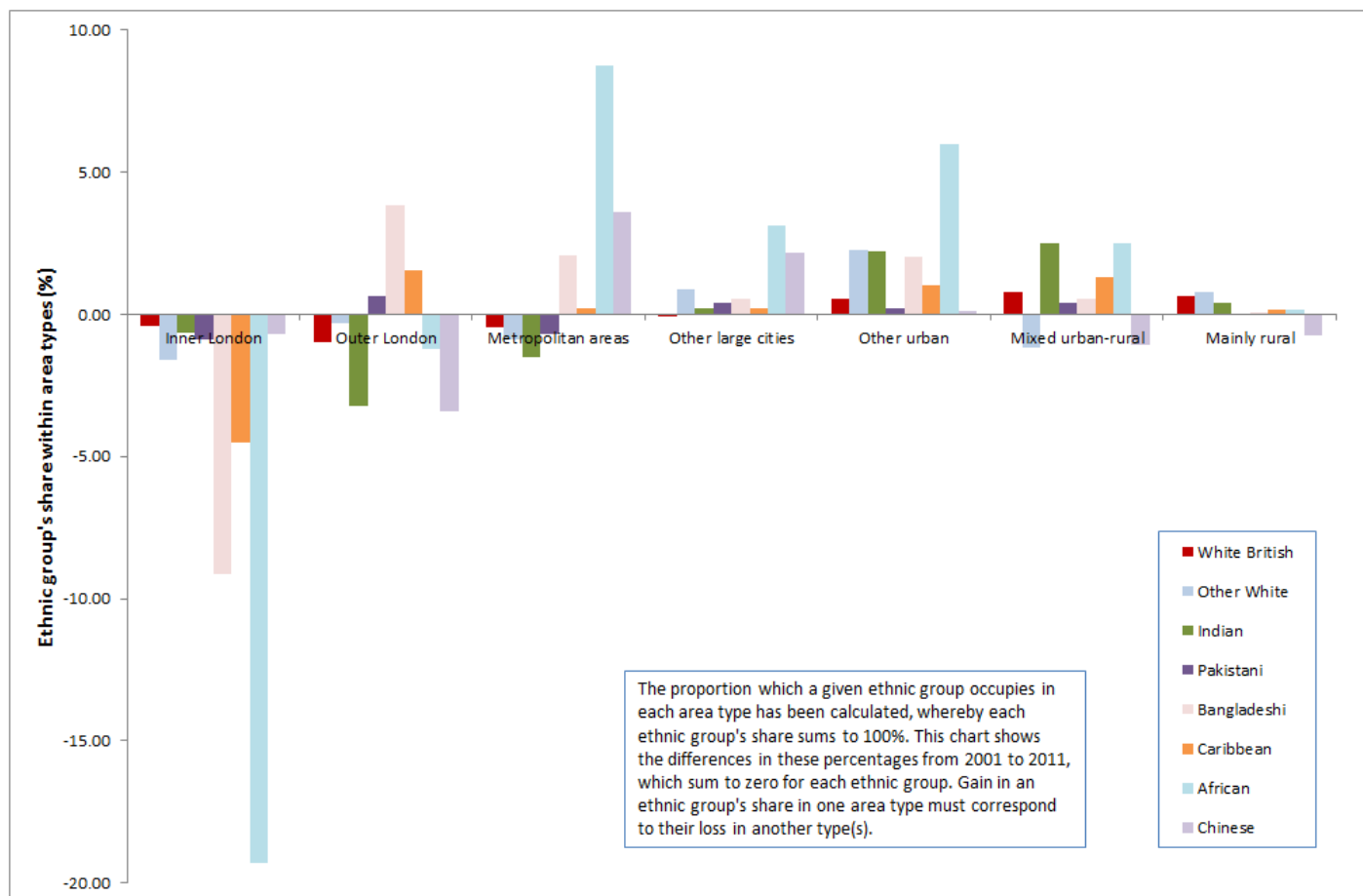
So what is happening to the White British population in these areas? There has been a White British population loss everywhere – in London, and in the rest of England and Wales, albeit White British population loss is highest in outer and inner London respectively. All area types are gaining ethnic minority population, except for population loss in all area types by the White Irish, from inner London for the Caribbean ethnic group, and population loss in some area types for the Any Other ethnic group (although it should be noted that the ‘Other’ ethnic groups are not comparable over time).¹⁰ For many ethnic minority groups, that group’s *smallest* gains are in the areas where the White British have seen their *greatest* population loss. For example, there has been a decrease in the percentage of people in inner London who identify as White British (expressed as the number of people in the inner London in 2011 minus the number in 2001, divided by the White British population in inner London in 2011). For most other ethnic groups, there has been an increase in inner London by this measure, but it has been smaller than their increases in other areas.

Ethnic minority populations have seen greater population growth in the areas in which they are not clustered, growing in districts where they have previously not resided in large proportions. This increased residential diversity is due to internal migration away from areas, as described above, plus immigration to new areas.¹¹

What might ‘White flight’ look like?

If it were to be a genuine large-scale phenomenon, ‘White flight’ could be indicated by a decreased share of the total White British population in ethnically diverse urban areas, and their increased share in areas where ethnic minority group populations are lowest. However, it would only be sensible to label these relative gains and losses as uniquely White British if this is not being mirrored by other ethnic groups. That claim cannot be made, as shown in Figure 1ⁱⁱⁱ. Here, the percentage of the ethnic group in each area type has been compared between 2001 and 2011. For example, 6% of the White British population resided in outer London districts in 2001, and this decreased to 5% in 2011; the graph shows this 1% decline over the decade. By exploring this percentage point change, we can understand better how each ethnic group’s share is changing within districts in England and Wales. So in which area types are ethnic groups decreasing or increasing their share? It is clear that *every* ethnic group is experiencing a proportional decline in inner London, and many are doing so for outer London too. Other urban areas have seen an increased share for all ethnic groups. The area type with the largest White British increase by this measure is in mixed urban-rural areas. Rather than this gain being suggestive of a ‘retreat’ from the White British population into these areas, their ‘attractiveness’ is also apparent for the Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Caribbean and African ethnic groups, many of whom are increasing their share more so than are the White British group. We see small proportional gains in mainly rural areas for all ethnic groups – White British *and* minority groups – except a very small decrease for the Pakistani group, and a small decrease by the Chinese group. It is not possible to assess how far these changes in the shares are due to internal migration, the balance of immigration and emigration, and natural change, however the data do not suggest that there has been a ‘self-segregation’ of any ethnic group, including White British. This is supported by the results for neighbourhood segregation reported above. The diversification of ethnic minority groups into areas where they were not previously present suggests new migration streams, for example through suburbanisation or rural in-migration, rather than in situ growth.

Figure 1. Gains and losses in ethnic group shares by type of urban and rural area, England and Wales, 2001 to 2011.



Sources: 2011 Census (Crown Copyright) and complete population estimates based on the 2001 Census (Crown Copyright).¹² Author's own calculations.

Notes

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ⁱⁱRead more about some of the results presented in this document in Catney, G. (2013) *Has neighbourhood ethnic segregation decreased?* Centre on Dynamics of Ethnicity (CoDE) Briefing, University of Manchester: Manchester, available online at http://www.ethnicity.ac.uk/census/885_CCSR_Neighbourhood_Bulletin_v7.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱFor selected ethnic groups. Other White comprises Other White and White Irish in 2001. In 2011, these categories were sub-divided to separately include a Gypsy or Irish Traveller group; this ethnic group is therefore also included here as Other White.

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