

Half Full or Half Empty?: How Has Ethnic Segregation in England and Wales Changed Between 2001 and 2011

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Discussion

An established method of looking at diversity in England and Wales is to take the ethnic minority population, divide it into five equal parts, or quintiles, and see how it is distributed across the roughly 8850 wards in the country.

Table 1. Distribution of the Population of England and Wales, by Ward, 2001 and 2011

	Wards 2001	White Share 2001	Wards 2011	White Share 2011
White Wards	7554	98%	6,722	94%
Relatively White	726	87%	1,029	79%
Medium White	288	73%	406	58%
High Nonwhite	180	57%	248	40%
Highest Nonwhite	102	34%	166	21%

Source: ONS Census of England and Wales 2001 and 2011; Simpson 2007: 412

- In 2001, for instance, a fifth of the minority population lived in just 102 wards in which the average white share of the population was 34%. A further fifth lived in another tranche of 180 wards, averaging 57% white. By contrast, in the vast bulk of wards, minorities were few and far between. These 7554 white wards which made up the whitest quintile were 98% white in 2001.
- The picture in 2011 has changed in large part because the number of ethnic minorities has increased from about 4.5 million in 2001 to a little over 10 million in 2011. This has lowered the white share in each quintile of wards.

On the positive side:

- There are more minorities living in the country's whitest places: a fifth of the minority population lives in 6722 wards in 2011 whereas it took fully 7554 to collect a fifth of minorities in 2001. As well, the average white share in the whitest areas is down to 94% in 2011 from 98% in 2001. So minorities are less rare in rural and provincial England. In fact there are fewer than 800 wards that remain over 98 percent white compared to more than 5000 wards in 2001.
- A quick glance at the chart shows that minorities have spread out: if we imagine a situation in which all quintiles contain an even 1770 wards to make up a national 8850, then it is the case that the upper quintile contains fewer wards and the lower four have more wards, indicating a slow correction of the skew. For instance, the number of wards in the lowest four quintiles have all risen toward 1770 and that in quintile 5 has fallen (from 7554 to 6772) toward 1770.
- National indicators such as the index of dissimilarity (ID), which measure segregation, show a modest decline in segregation between 2001 and 2011 (Simpson 2012; Catney 2013).

On the negative side:

- Though white areas have become less white, minority areas have not become less minority. In fact, 4.1 million minorities (41% of the minority population) live in wards that are less than 50% white, i.e. more diverse than Yardley in Birmingham. This compares with about a million minorities (25% of the minority population) living in white minority wards in 2001
- In 2001, just 119 wards were majority nonwhite. In 2011, 429 were.
- In 2001, a fifth of minorities lived in the most diverse quintile, where 33 percent of the population was white. Today, a fifth of minorities live in the most diverse quintile, which is just 21 percent white.

- What is occurring is that, with a few exceptions, when whites and minorities leave inner-city areas of minority concentration, their place is generally taken by other minorities through natural increase or immigration
- Overall, minorities are entering white areas but whites are often avoiding minority areas, producing a growing number of zones in which minorities are relatively isolated from whites. This pattern has also been commented upon in the metropolitan United States (Logan and Zhang 2011)

Therefore the national segregation picture is neither wholly positive nor wholly negative. More minorities are entering white areas. However, it also appears that a significant rise in the ethnic minority population leads to a wider share of wards where there is limited opportunity for interaction with whites. It should be mentioned that a growing share of these minority areas are multi-minority, since new minorities (i.e. Somalis) take up housing vacated by established minorities (i.e. Afro-Caribbeans). This signals a dissipation of ethnic concentrations, but also an increase in the number of people who have limited contact with white British people.

Most jobs come through knowing someone, and most of those hiring for good jobs are from the white majority. A growing population with limited familiarity with majority cultural codes or connection to majority networks may find its occupational mobility reduced. Canadian studies, for example, show that immigrants in cities with larger immigrant shares of the population (i.e. Toronto, Vancouver) perform less well against the national average than immigrants in smaller, less diverse cities. In addition, as the Canadian population has become more diverse, immigrant underperformance against the national average has increased, from 85 cents for immigrants compared to the native-born in 1980 to 63 cents per native-born dollar in 2005.¹ The Canadian case is not perfectly analogous to that of Britain, but suggests that minority isolation from the ethnic majority may be a cause for concern.

References

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¹ 'Trends in economic performance of immigrants in Canada,' Statistics Canada, <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/research/2012-migrant/sec05.asp>, modified 2012-09-18