

# Population change and ethnic (de-?)segregation in London: evidence from the Census

## Introduction

Increasingly Britain has a diverse population that draws from a range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Focusing on England and Wales, from the 2001 to the 2011 Census the number of people of a Bangladeshi, Indian or Pakistani background rose by 46.8 per cent, from 2032463, which was 3.9 per cent of the total population, to 2984670, which was 5.3 per cent. Those of a Black African or Black Caribbean background rose by 51.8 per cent, from 536049, which was 1 per cent of the total population, to 1584453, which was 2.8 per cent. Those of a 'White Other' background, which includes immigrants from the EU and also from places such as Australasia and North America, rose by 84.8 from 1345321 (2.6 per cent of the population) to 2485942 (4.4 per cent). In contrast, the largest group, the White British, decreased in number by 0.9 per cent, from 45533741 to 45134686, thereby comprising a smaller percentage of the total population: 87.5 per cent in 2001 and 80.5 per cent in 2011.

These demographic changes are of interest to social and population geographers, as well as to policy makers, some of whom are interested in whether there has been an increase in **residential segregation** as the ethnic composition of the population has diversified. Segregation is a difficult word, often laden with negative connotations. In academic research the meaning is more neutral: it refers to the outcome of various processes, choices or restrictions on people (such as where they can afford to live) that leave a particular group of the population prevalent in places where another group is not. Sometimes evidence of residential segregation is linked with concerns about racial integration (or, rather, the lack of it). The **inter-group contact hypothesis** suggests that contact between different groups reduces prejudice and conflict between them so if two or more groups are 'living apart' then that could be a situation affecting or affected by levels of (mis-)trust, cooperation and understanding between them.<sup>1</sup>

Such concerns are evident in the Government commissioned [The Casey Review: a review into opportunity and integration](#), which was published in 2016 and generated the following headlines:

*Segregation at 'worrying levels' in parts of Britain, Dame Louise Casey warns*  
([BBC News, December 5, 2016](#))

*Casey review raises alarm over social integration in the UK*  
([The Guardian, December 5, 2016](#))

and, in a sensationalist tone,

*GHETTO BLASTER Mass immigration to Britain has changed it beyond recognition and turned communities into ghettos, reveals damning report*  
([The Sun, December 4, 2016](#))

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<sup>1</sup> Allport GW (1954) *The nature of prejudice*. Cambridge/Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley

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The findings were surprising because a number of researchers have argued that ethnic residential segregation **decreased** between 2001 and 2011, which are the dates of the two last censuses and the most current sources of reliable data about where people live. To see this decrease, take a look at [Figure 4](#) of *Has neighbourhood ethnic segregation decreased?* written by the geographer Gemma Catney. Note that in most cases the percentage change in segregation has been downwards.

This is not to suggest that ethnic inequalities no longer persist. For short studies of how they do in Dagenham, Manchester and Bristol, see the briefings produced by the [Centre on Dynamics of Ethnicity](#). Also, if we look again at Figure 4 of Gemma Catney's briefing, we can find an exception: there is slightly increasing segregation between the White British and other groups, especially within London.

London is a major world city so what is happening to generate the increase? Is it a process of segregation in the sense of one or more of the groups choosing to avoid each other or are there other geographical processes that might account for the demographic changes taking place?

Those are questions we shall look at here.

### **Where are the White British living?**

We have learned, in the introduction, that in the 2011 Census, 80.5 per cent of the residential population of England and Wales classified themselves as of a White British ethnicity, from the choices available in the census. However, this countrywide value disguises significant geographical variation. For major towns and cities, the figure was 92.1 per cent. For other areas, it was 67.2.

Figure 1 digs deeper into the ethnic composition of nine of the largest cities in England ([based on this classification](#)). It shows, for each city, the percentage of the residential population belonging to each of eight ethnic groups looked at in the census: the White British (WhBrt), Bangladeshi (Bang), Indian (Indn), Pakistani (Pakn), Black African (BlkAfr), Black Caribbean (BlkCar), those of a mixed ethnicity (Mixed) and White Other (WhOth)<sup>2</sup>. The percentages are shown on a **radar plot** where each axis represents an ethnic group and the percentages are indicated by how far along the axis the shaded area extends out from the centre. In most cases, and for most cities, it is not very far.

The major exception is the White British group, which always is the largest. Nevertheless, there are geographical variations. In Bradford, the Pakistani group comprises more than 25 percent of the population; in Leicester, the Indian population does. Even for the White British, there are differences between the cities. Bristol and Liverpool have a higher percentage White British than do Birmingham, Bradford, Leicester and Manchester. Look very closely and you may observe something that differentiates London from the rest: it is the only city where the percentage of the population that is White British is less than 50 per cent.

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<sup>2</sup> For simplicity, some other groups counted in the census are omitted from the charts

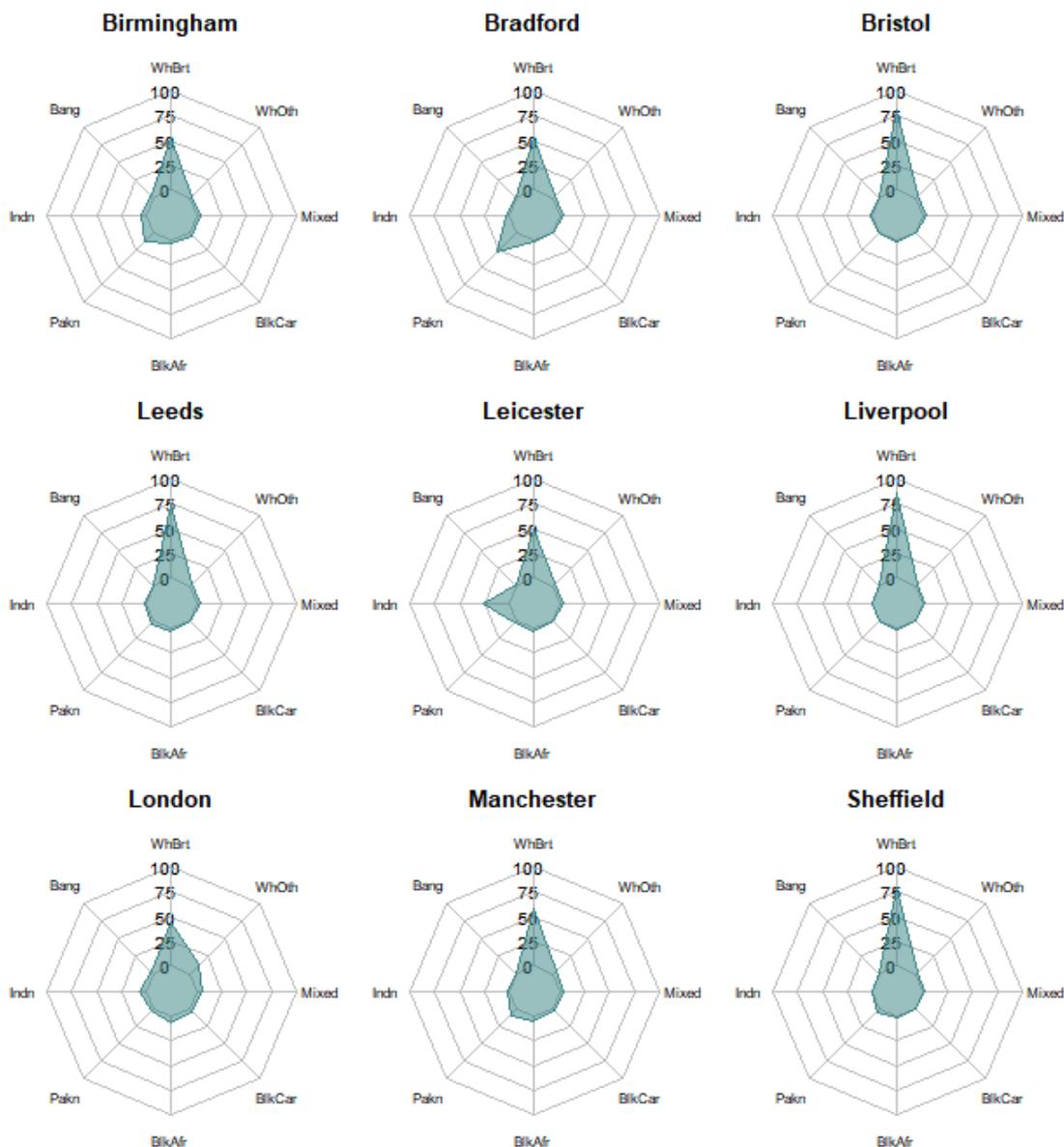


Figure 1. Radar plots of the ethnic composition of nine cities in England

### The Ethnic Geography of London

The fact that less than half the residential population of London identified as White British did not go unnoticed. After the release of the 2011 Census data, The Daily Telegraph published a commentary with the headline

*Let's talk about the exodus of 600,000 whites from London*  
[The Daily Telegraph, Feb 22, 2013](#)

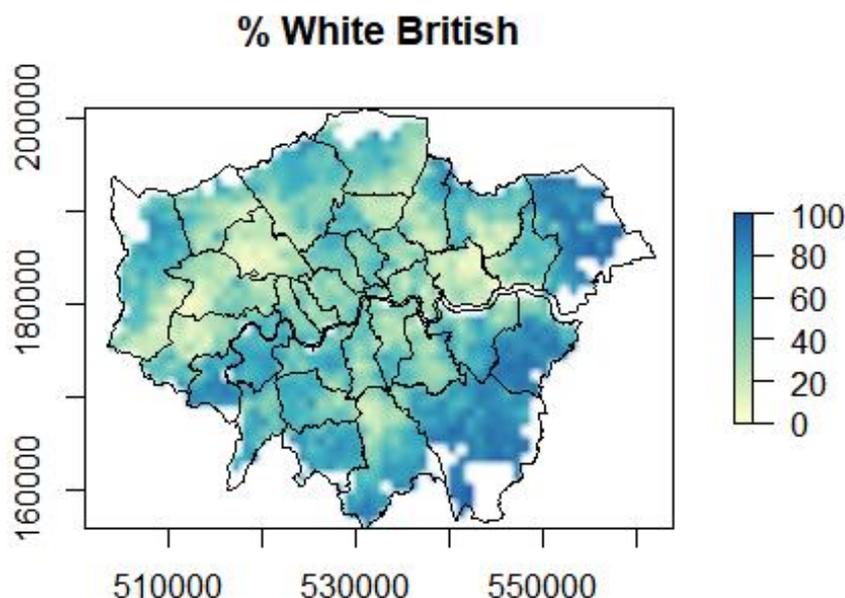
That 600,000 figure comes from comparing the 2011 Census data for London with the 2001 Census data, as in Table 1. The number of White British resident in London decreased by 14.4 percent over the period, although the total population increased by 618577 percent. There was a 56.2 per cent increase in the number of people of an ethnicity other than White British. You can view the data yourself at <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/> (where you also can find profiles of your local area). The 2001 data for London are [here](#), and the 2011 data are [here](#).

	2011	2001	Difference	% change
White British	3669284	4287861	-618577	-14.4
Not White British	4504657	2884230	1620427	56.2
Total	8173941	7172091	1001850	14.0

*Table 1. The number of the London population who were White British or not according to the 2001 and 2011 Censuses*

London is a multicultural city - you can see quite how much so by [viewing this Census table](#). Unlike in the rest of England and Wales, where 98.3 per cent of the White British population live in a neighbourhood where the White British are in the majority, in London the figure falls to 61.1.

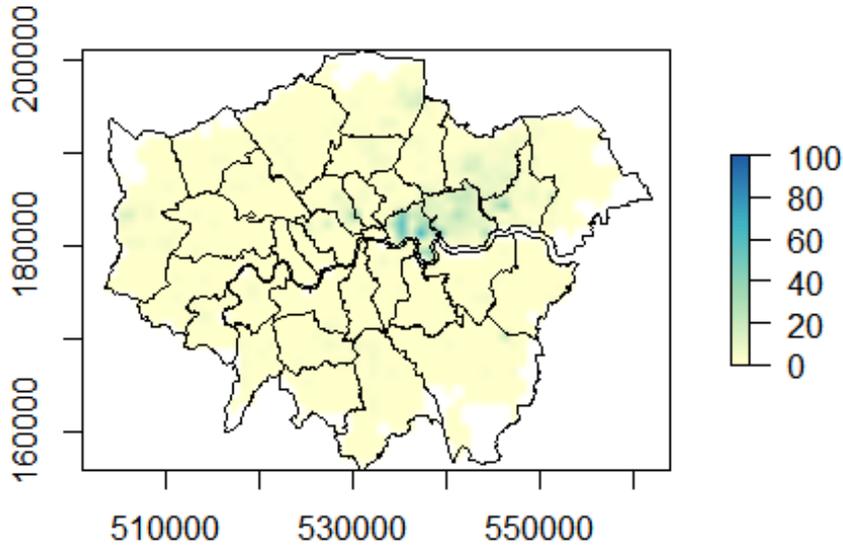
Nevertheless, there is a geography to where different ethnic groups are living in London. It can be seen in the **choropleth maps** below.<sup>3</sup> The White British are found more towards the edge of the city, the Bangladeshis nearer the centre (in the East end), whereas the Indians and the Pakistanis share a broadly similar geography to each other, located in the west around Heathrow for example, the East End, and some parts of south London. You can compare these geographies with those for the Black African, Black Caribbean and White Other groups. That there is geography to where people live is not surprising: the patterns reflect past and current patterns of immigration, of housing cost and availability, of employment opportunities, of education advantages and disadvantages, of wealth and inequality, and so forth. Residential geographies are shaped by other social, economic and demographic geographies. You can explore census data with the online map at <http://datashine.org.uk>. You might like to compare the residential geographies with the geography of surnames in London. That can be explored at <http://names.mappinglondon.co.uk/>



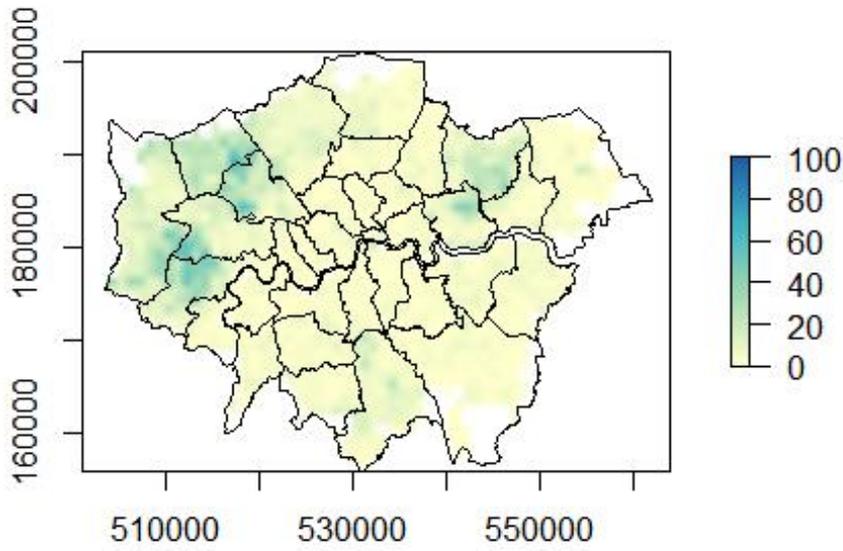
<sup>3</sup> The maps have been interpolated from Census data to a regular grid to help make the broad patterns clearer. The percentages are approximate.



### % Bangladeshi

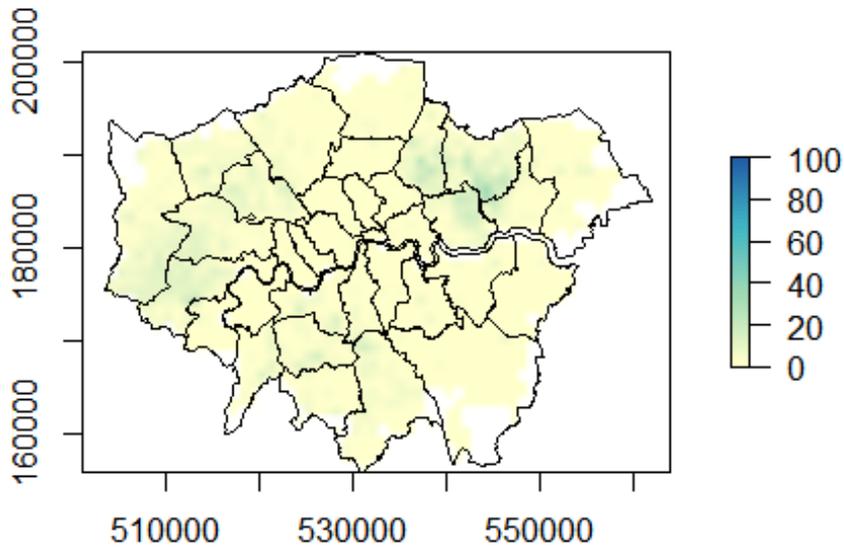


### % Indian

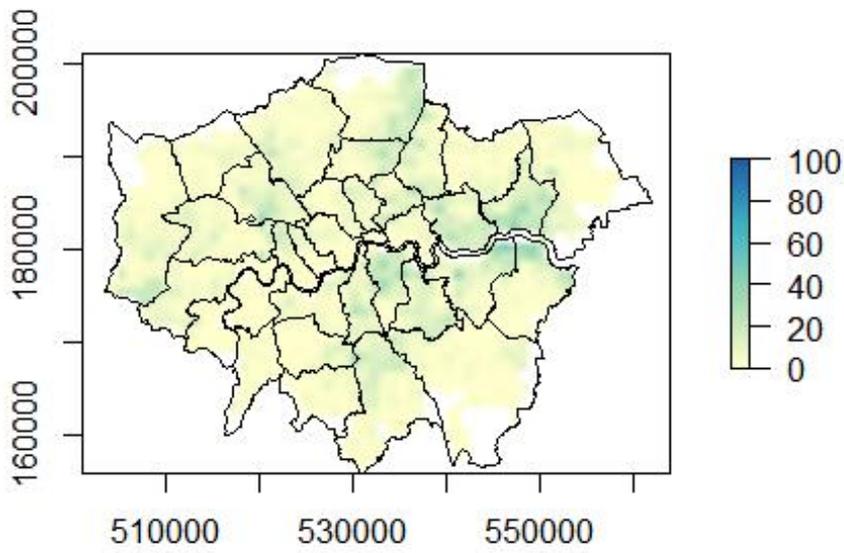




### % Pakistani



### % Black African



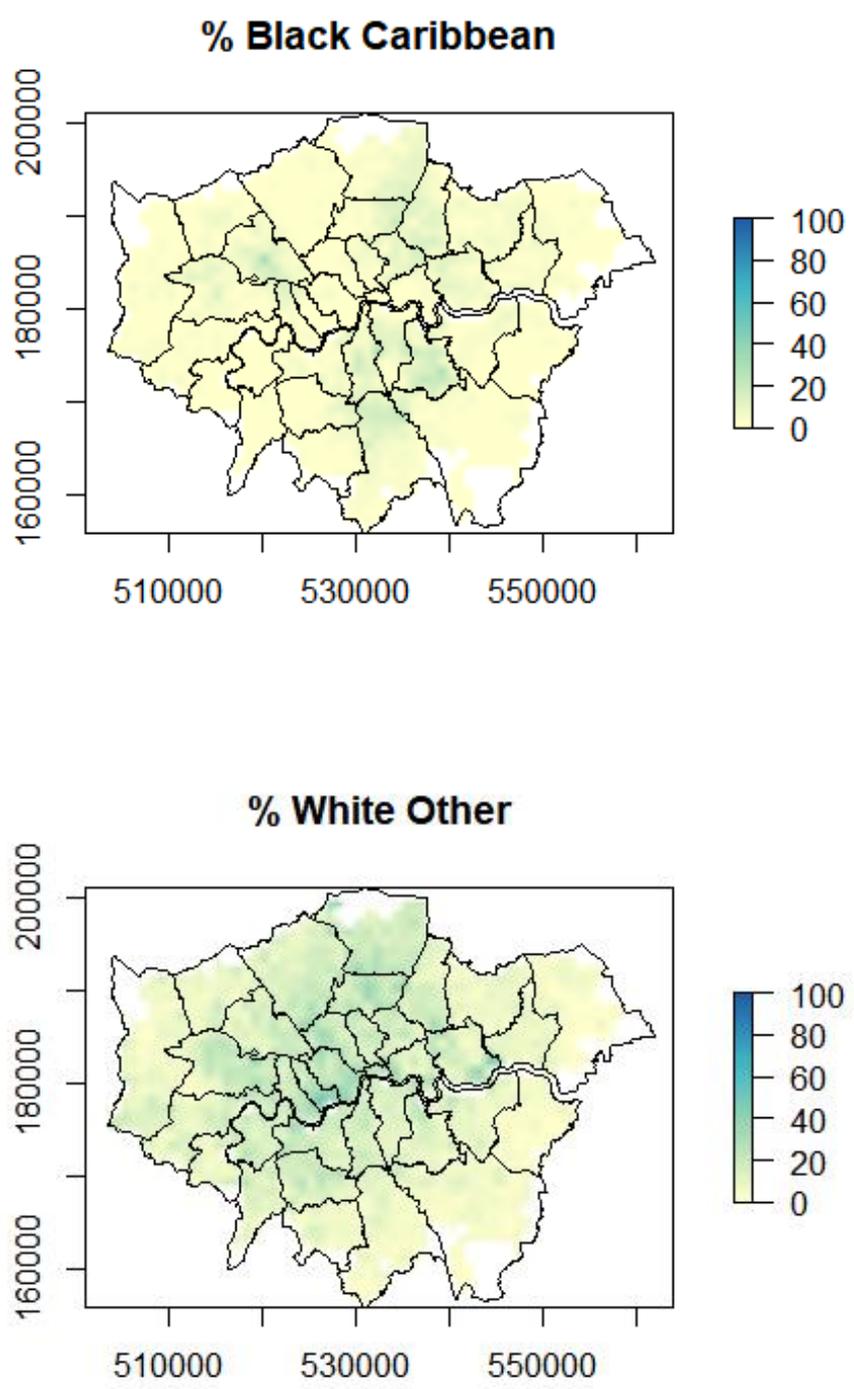


Figure 2. Showing the percentages of the resident population that belong to the various ethnic groups across London in 2011

The maps show that the various ethnic groups are not spread evenly across the city but concentrated within certain parts of it. We can get an idea of how concentrated by plotting what are known as **concentration profiles**. The idea is very simple. If the Bangladeshi population, for example, was evenly spread across London then if we selected any half of all the neighbourhoods within London we ought to find half of the total Bangladeshi population living within them.<sup>4</sup> In fact, half of all Bangladeshis can be found in just 3.74 per cent of all neighbourhoods which means they are very much concentrated in specific locations, namely Newham and Tower Hamlets. Other groups, too, are disproportionately found in some parts of the city but not others - see Figure 3, below. Being much larger in size, the group most spread out across London is the White British. But even for these, 50 per cent of all White British can be found in just 32.89% of all neighbourhoods.

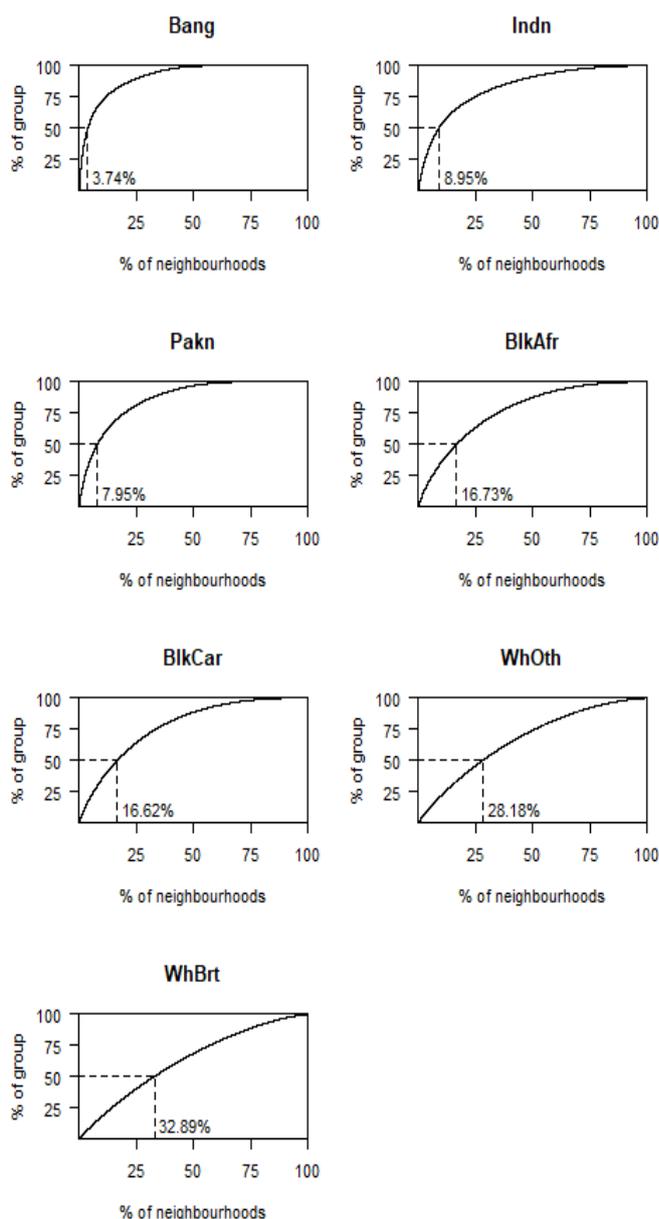


Figure 3. Concentration profiles showing how concentrated the various ethnic groups are into specific locations

<sup>4</sup> Although really this is only true if all the neighbourhoods have the same total population size

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The question is whether the geographical patterns, including the clustering of particular groups in particular places, represent a state of spatial (and/or social) segregation? One way to think about this is to ask what percentage of each ethnic group live in a neighbourhood where their own group forms a majority. For Bangladeshis, it is 15.5 per cent. For Indians it is 7.1; for Pakistanis, 0; for Black Africans, 0.4; for Black Caribbeans, 0; and for the white Other group, 0.2. Only for the White British is the percentage sizable, reaching the 61.3 per cent that was reported earlier. The key point is that nearly all of most ethnic groups except the White British are living in what are mixed (or, at least, not mono-ethnic) neighbourhoods in London.

Furthermore, those neighbourhoods have become more mixed over the period from 2001 to 2011 as groups have moved out from where they previously lived into other places. The various studies that have looked at the changes have highlighted the following:<sup>5</sup>

1. a pattern of spatial retrenchment and contraction of the White British out of London and other traditionally industrial cities;
2. a process of dispersion and spatial diffusion of 'minority' groups across cities as their numbers grow and they move out from their previous enclaves;
3. that the places that those groups move to have declining numbers of White British residents; but
4. that the places that the White British are moving to are gradually becoming more ethnically diverse.

It's also important to remember that "a fall in London's 'white British' population does not mean the city is now 'majority-migrant'", to quote the sub-heading of [an article in the New Statesman](#). In fact, the 2011 Census showed that 63.3 per cent of London's residents were born in the UK and 77.2 per cent of passports held by residents were issued by the UK. Therefore, much of the change in London is due to changes in the ethnic mix of the population, rather than its nationality.

### **Looking again at the White British**

Nevertheless, concerns about the level of integration between the White British and other populations remain. For example, in November 2016, The Independent published the following graphic under the headline,

*British towns and cities are becoming more segregated*  
([The Independent, November 3, 2016](#))

The caption for the graphic is as it appeared on The Independent's website.

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<sup>5</sup> For example, see Chapter 2 of [Mapping Integration](#)



Figure 4. England's most segregated local authorities source: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/segregated-ethnic-minorities-uk-towns-cities-society-white-majority-british-a7395491.html>

In a recent article for Open Democracy two academics observe that,

1. "Segregation between the White British majority and minorities remains quite high";
2. "Minorities in many towns and cities, traditionally the areas of settlement for minorities, are becoming more isolated from White British people";
3. "Minorities in a significant and growing number of smaller geographic areas are becoming highly isolated from White British people"; and
4. "Where areas have become more mixed, minorities have generally become more isolated from the White British"

They state that "this is a function of the decline of the White British population in those towns and cities in absolute numbers and relative to the increase in minorities in the same areas. This results in a growing isolation of the White majority from minorities in urban zones."

If you want to see the changes in the ethnic composition of towns and cities from one census to the next the try using the [Popchange] (<https://popchange.liverpool.ac.uk/>) service at the University of Liverpool.

The critical question is *why* there has been a decline in the number of White British from places like London. A very good article [published in the Financial Times](#) explores some of the issues around diversity and cohesion in London and acknowledges that "some white Britons may have moved because they did not like the diversity of their areas."

However, it goes on to add that "many others have chosen to [move] because they simply wanted a bigger house and a quiet life." The BBC's home editor, Mark Easton, [has made the same point](#).

A well known model of urban land use is the [Burgess Concentric Model](#). Although it is drawn as a series of concentric circles that are static on a piece of paper, what has to be imagined is a dynamic process radiating out from the centre, the Central Business District. For an analogy, think of throwing a stone in water and watching the wave ripple outwards. The rings represent the ripple.

### Concentric Zone Model or Burgess Model

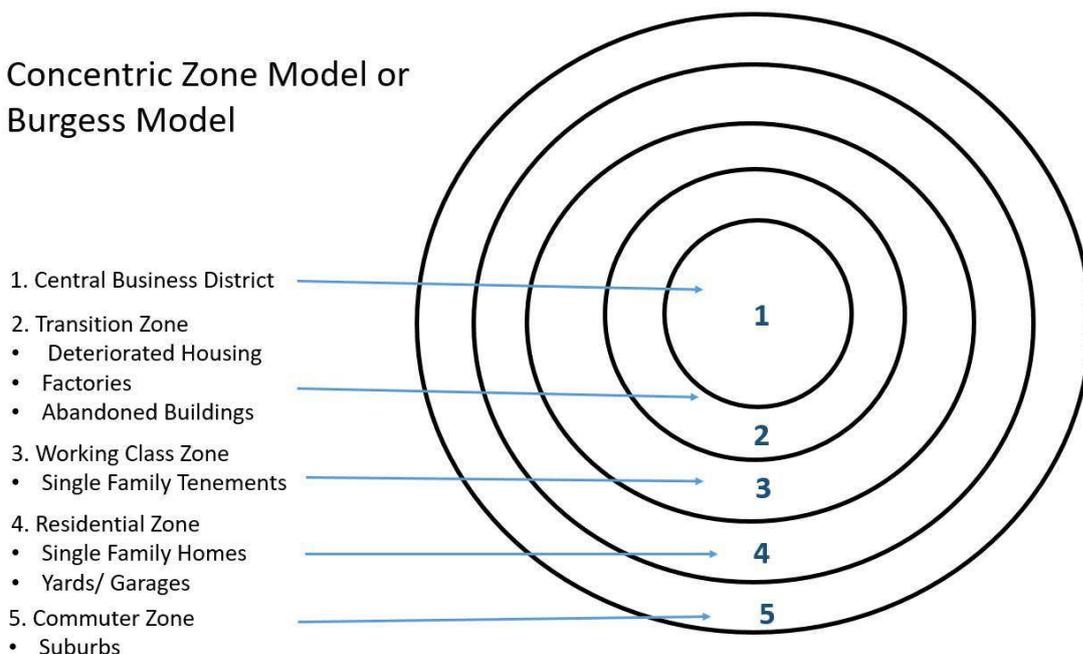


Figure 5. The Burgess Concentric Circle Model, source: <http://planningtank.com/settlement-geography/burgess-model-or-concentric-zone-model>

The process the model described for Chicago in the 1930s is one of population movement towards the suburbs by those who have the means to do so. As a model of how cities evolve, it is simplistic. Nevertheless, think of it in terms of London where property prices (including rental) are very high. (According to [one study](#) London ranks 23rd in a league table that measures "prime" house prices in cities around the world. [Another](#) reports that the house price gap between London and the rest of the country has risen almost ten-fold over the last 20 years to reach nearly £300,000). That might be fine for high earners but how do others respond? How can their housing be affordable? One way, is to fit more people into smaller spaces creating higher housing densities. That is what is happening in London, especially in neighbourhoods where members of the ethnic minority groups are concentrated<sup>6</sup> The other is to move out of the city to more rural living, if your salary and type of work permit it. Here ethnic minorities are (on average) at a disadvantage when compared to the White British due to inequalities in the labour market, i.e. the jobs and

<sup>6</sup> Johnston R et al. (2016) House price increases and higher density housing occupation: the response of non-white households in London, 2001-2011

salaries available.<sup>7</sup> These factors may explain some of the differences in where people live.

There is a further consideration that marks the White British as somewhat different from other ethnic groups: generally, they are older (Figure 6 shows this for the whole of England). Being older means that if there is a process of living in cities whilst younger but being more likely to move out as they age - perhaps to raise children with more living space or, later still, to retire - then the White British are going to be further along that process than other groups. What looks like a process of segregation might actually be a process of 'moving on and moving out' with different groups on different points of that process.

In short, there are demographic, social and economic factors that intertwine to create the residential geographies we can find in London.

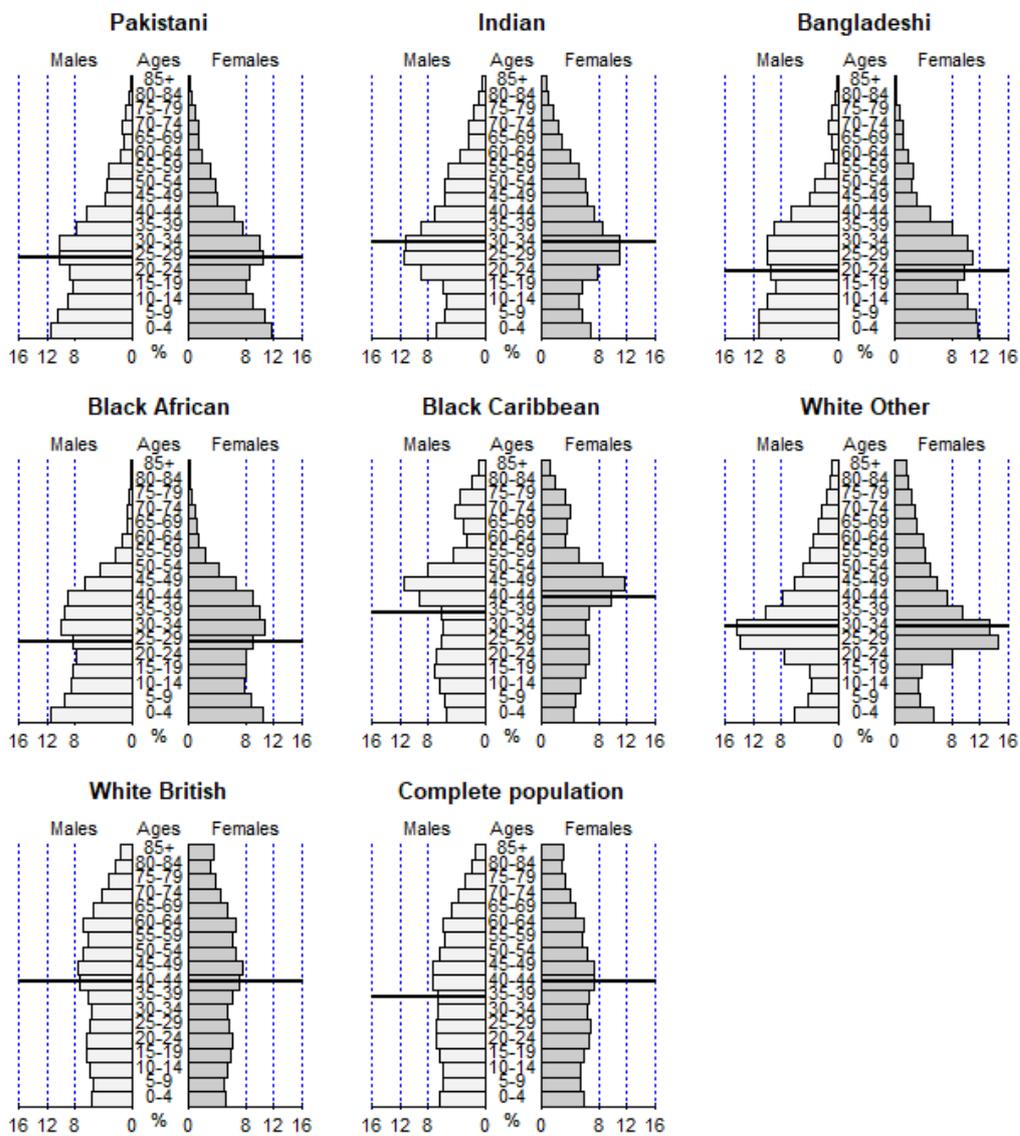


Figure 6. Population pyramids of the English population in 2011. The solid black lines indicate the median age for males and for females

<sup>7</sup> Catney G & Sabater A (2015) Ethnic minority disadvantage in the labour market

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## Conclusion: segregation or de-segregation?

An interesting feature of the debates around segregation in London is that they are using the same data to reach opposite conclusions: some say ethnic segregation is increasing; some say it is decreasing. So which is it?

The answers depends on which groups are looked at. On the whole, neighbourhoods are becoming more mixed but that is despite not because of the decrease in number of the White British. It is true that the White British have become less prevalent in cities such as London.

However, that means if we were to identify any one group that is segregated from the others then it is not any of those ethnicities that could be described as being 'minority' groups or which are shown on the images that accompanies the BBC headline about segregation being at 'worrying levels' (see Figure 7). Rather, if any group is choosing to live apart then the data demonstrate it is actually the White British.<sup>8</sup>



Figure 7. The image that appears under the headline "Segregation at 'worrying levels' in parts of Britain, Dame Louise Casey warns" on the BBC News website, source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-38200989>

### Further reading

For differing and often contrasting views about the state of integration and of segregation in England and Wales, compare some of the reports and commentaries at the [Integration Hub](#) with those at the [Centre of Dynamics of Ethnicity](#).

The [executive summary of the Casey Report](#) also makes interesting reading, as does [this brief reply to it](#) from the Race Equality Foundation, and [this](#) from the Muslim Council of Britain. My own initial response to the report is [available here](#).

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<sup>8</sup> A commentary at <http://www.integrationhub.net/what-about-the-whites-saggar/> makes a similar point



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