

What do we know about our culturally diverse population?

Heather Maitland on Britain's increasingly multicultural society

Hardish Virk, this issue's guest editor, asked me to research the answers to three simple questions:

- How have the UK's demographics changed?
- What will be the impact of recent immigration trends?
- What is the impact of recent immigration from Eastern Europe?

I wish the answers were as straightforward as the questions.

How have the UK's demographics changed?

In the simplest terms, we need the answer to this question because we want to understand the communities our organisations serve so we can see

how those communities are reflected in our audiences, visitors and participants.

Broad-brush statistics on ethnicity and religion in your local area, broken down into 16 categories, are readily available: for Scotland go to www.sns.gov.uk, for Northern Ireland go to www.ninis.nisra.gov.uk and for England and Wales go to www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk.

Minority ethnic groups make up 7.9% of the UK population.¹ But there is huge variation: in the 2001 census in Belgrave Ward in the London Borough of Westminster, 51.5% of people described themselves as part of a minority ethnic group; in Belgrave, Leicester, the figure is 39.5% and in Belgrave, Tamworth in the West Midlands, it is 3.5%.² In this census, for the first time, a question was asked about people's religion which at least gives us a glimpse of the diversity within different ethnic groups.

The BBC has put together interactive web pages on Britain's diverse communities from analysis by the Institute of Public Policy Research and Sheffield University.³

They use statistics on where people were born rather than how they describe themselves, which gives more detailed categories, but the most recent data is still 2001. In Belgrave, Leicester, the top five places of birth were, in descending order, India, Other South and East Africa, Kenya, Other Central and West Africa, and Pakistan.

In Belgrave, Tamworth, they were Germany, the Caribbean, India, Other South and East Africa, and Kenya.

We also want to target particular groups with arts events and activities that we think will be of interest to them. The *Guardian* has developed *Britain: the world in one country*, an interactive map which shows where different ethnic minority populations are located.⁴ If you want to maximise your audience for Albert Nyathi's brilliant band Imbongi then the site will show you that there are significant communities of people born in Zimbabwe living in Milton Keynes, Luton, Slough and Southend. The BBC *Born Abroad* website will give you the top ten UK wards for people born in 46 countries and 14 world regions. The National Centre for Languages has links to a map of London boroughs showing significant populations from a wide range of minority ethnic groups.⁵

But these figures are hotly disputed. Not only are there different ways of looking at ethnicity – which means that data releases from different government departments can contradict each other – but the best statistics available are from the 2001 census. Any more recent figures are projections based on data on internal and external migration – which are flaky, to say the least.

Can we trust the statistics?

Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah pointed out in the *Guardian* that projections of how big the UK's population will be by 2081 vary wildly, ranging between 64 and 108 million people. We've been wildly wrong in the past too.



In 1965, the forerunner of the Office of National Statistics (ONS) predicted that by 2000 the UK would have a population of 75 million. Accuracy all depends on correct predictions of birth rates, life expectancy, immigration, emigration and whether migrants will stay as they have tended to in the past or return to their country of origin as it seems that Polish communities are doing. That's a lot to get right.

We can only really guess how many people are living in the UK at present. And that's not an exaggeration. Even the embassies don't know; for example, the Turkish embassy website estimates the number of Turkish nationals living in the UK at around 150,000, mostly living in Islington, Hackney, Haringey, Stoke Newington, Turnpike Lane and Newington Green in North London, Peckham and Lewisham in South London, and Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool and Leeds. They don't know because official figures don't include people born in the UK, illegal immigrants and people who have arrived here since census day 2001. It is thought, for example, that the population of Zimbabwean origin has grown particularly rapidly in recent years. The BBC *Born Abroad* website suggests two reasons: the National Health Service has employed many more Zimbabwean doctors and nurses than in the past and the country's political problems have led to a rise in asylum seekers.

Worries over the figures mean that anecdotal evidence carries disproportionate weight in the debate about immigration. But flaky figures have a more direct impact on local

authorities whose funding is based on the ONS's population estimates. The London Borough of Newham is just one local authority trying to get to the bottom of the discrepancies. According to the ONS, over the past two years Newham's population has shrunk more than anywhere else in the country but the Borough's own figures based on local data sources such as school rolls, Council Tax payers, electoral registration and registration with doctors' surgeries, show the opposite.

The main figures for migration are taken from the International Passenger Survey which samples 0.2% of people arriving at selected ports and airports during office hours.⁶ Newham argues that the survey has a sample too small to be robust, misses out flights from Asian countries which tend to arrive in the early hours of the morning, only asks people about their first stopping-off point, not where they plan to settle, and only counts people who have already decided they will stay for more than a year.

The only ways of monitoring the way people move about within Britain are through people registering with a different doctors' surgery (which they don't have to) or through a longitudinal study of a 1% sample of the resident population of England and Wales born on one of four selected dates of birth. It works by linking the census returns from this sample across the 1971, 1981, 1991 and 2001 censuses and adding in a sample of new migrants with the selected birth dates at each census.



Through primary research to back up the statistics, Barrow Cadbury Trust have identified a trend in Birmingham for middle-class people from white and minority ethnic backgrounds to move out of inner cities into the suburbs and villages.⁷

As long ago as 2002, the ONS researched how to improve the statistics but nothing much has changed yet.⁸

What is the impact of recent immigration trends?

*'The butcher shop on our high street displays a sign that reads: "Buy your halal Christmas turkey here".'*⁹

Britain's diversity is becoming more diverse according to research into people living in Britain but born overseas.⁹ We can no longer think of Britain's ethnic minority population as characterised by large and long-standing African-Caribbean and Asian communities.

In the 1930s, immigrants typically came from one of 15 countries, with the vast majority from Ireland and South Asia. Predictions now are that, in cities with a history of immigration across Europe and North America, no one ethnic group will make up more than half of the population – 'plural' cities. Some London boroughs are like this already.

But cities will evolve differently. Leicester and Birmingham are forecast to be Britain's first plural cities within a couple of decades. In Leicester, the biggest changes are likely to be among people describing themselves as African or as 'Other'. In the 1991 census, for example, Africans made up

0.4% of the population and in 2026 this proportion is predicted to rise to 11.2%. In Birmingham, the biggest increases are likely to be among people of Pakistani origins already living in the city rather than from migration.

One way of getting more up-to-date information is a by-product of what happens when someone gets their first (legal) job. Their employer has to apply for a National Insurance number on their behalf and the form includes a question about country of origin. There were 236,000 National Insurance Number (NINo) registrations of foreign nationals in 2005/06 in London but the proportion of all NINo registrations that are in London has dropped slightly from 42% to 36% between 2002/03 and 2005/06.

This data shows that South Asian registrants tend to be located where there are already well-established communities from the same country of origin. The data is also useful in identifying communities in areas where cultural diversity has not previously been an issue and which may have been missed by other research, for example a cluster of Nepalese registrants in North Yorkshire and people born in China in North Wales.

The Audit Office has collated information from a wide range of public sector sources.¹⁰

It found that migrant workers made up 3.5% of the workforce in 1996, but 6% in 2006 and,

contrary to public opinion, most are young and few bring dependants, so their need for public services is low.

What is the impact of recent immigration from Eastern Europe?

At the end of February, the government released an online report based on management information from the Worker Registration Scheme looking at migrant workers from the eight Eastern European countries that joined the EU in 2004.¹¹

Eastern Europeans are going where the work is. The proportion applying to work in London fell from 20% in 2004 to 10% in 2007 while the proportion in Anglia and the Midlands rose to 14% each.

They are filling gaps in the labour market with 44% working in administration, business and management and with hospitality and



catering, agriculture, manufacturing and food, fish and meat processing as other key areas. They are also working in the public service sector. In 2007, 2,015 registered as bus, lorry and coach drivers, 4,325 as care workers, 815 as teachers, researchers and classroom assistants, 110 as dental practitioners, and 1,035 as GPs, hospital doctors, nurses and medical specialists.

They are young, too. Since 2004, 82% of those registered were aged between 18 and 34 and only 6% had dependants under the age of 17 with them.

These statistics have limitations, too. They only include people who register for employment and don't include self-employed people or people whose employment is for less than a month. The information about geography and employment sector is only for the first job that workers get in the UK. They don't have to de-register when they leave so the figures are cumulative.

The people with the most accurate and up-to-date picture of



communities in your local area are likely to be local authority officers involved in strategic planning, housing, education and economic development. And they may be able to help you access real people, not just the statistics, which is always the place to start developing audiences. ■



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- You will need to download both the map at http://www.cilt.org.uk/faqs/london_ethnic_map.pdf and the text key at http://www.cilt.org.uk/faqs/london_ethnic_map_key.rtf
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