‘Sleepwalking to segregation’?

Challenging myths about race and migration

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Myths and counterarguments: a quick reference summary
Immigration

The evidence: The UK experience of international migration is not remarkable when set in a global context

The myth: Britain has an unfair share of immigrants

- The number of immigrants in Britain (foreign-born) increased from 2.6 million in 1961 to 5.4 million in 2005. This rise of 110% is the same as the worldwide increase. These UN calculations take into account the changes in boundaries in Europe and the Soviet Union (pp 55-56).
- Increased international migration is a common experience for developed, economically strong nations. Immigration is expected for countries with strong economies as international moves are shaped by patterns of supply and demand of jobs and labour (pp 59, 84-85).
- Not only has the UK's immigration grown in line with world migration, but the UK has a smaller proportion of immigrants and lower rates of net immigration than the US, Canada, Australia and several large European countries (pp 55-56, 59-60, Table 3.2).
  - Less than 3% of the world's migrants live in the UK compared with 5% in Germany and 20% in the US (pp 59-60).
  - Migrants (those born outside the country) make up 9% of the population in the UK compared with 12% in Germany and 13% in the US. 9% is the average for Europe (p 60, Table 3.2).
  - The UK's net in-migration rate is 2 per 1,000 population compared with 3 in Germany and 4 in the US (p 60, Table 3.2).

For more on Britain's immigration experience in global context, see Chapter Three.

The evidence: Measurement of international migration requires care, and recognition of the diversity of migrants

The myth: We all know how much immigration there is (too much)

- The challenges of measuring international migration do not justify an assumption that levels of immigration are problematically large (pp 54-56).
• Ethnicity and immigration should not be confused: half of all minority residents were born in the UK and two thirds of immigrants are White (p 57).
• Undocumented migration is by its nature not measurable (and can only be estimated), except after an amnesty (p 57).

For more on measuring immigration, see Chapter Three.

The evidence: Immigrants are diverse and increasingly short-term stayers

The myth: Britain’s flooded with problem immigrants

• Immigration to Britain in the year prior to the last census was equivalent to less than 1% of the population. In total, around 6% of residents in Britain are foreign nationals (residents who do not have British citizenship) (p 57).
• The myth of too many immigrants only has weight because it focuses on so-called ‘problem’ immigrants and in doing so draws on negative stereotypes (pp 56–57).
• Only 6% of recent immigrants to Britain were asylum seekers (p 56).
• Of the 205,000 migrants from European Union (EU) Accession countries in 2005, almost two thirds intended to stay for less than three months and would therefore not be classed as immigrants. The significance of short-term international migration is increasing (p 56).

For more on the diversity of immigration to Britain, see Chapter Three.

The evidence: Immigrants are a select group: young, motivated and skilled

The myth: Immigrants are lazy, good-for-nothing scroungers

• Immigrants are entrepreneurial, fill labour market gaps and improve productivity (p 62).
• Immigrants tend to be professionals and managers and this has been the case for three decades. Even refugees, often thought of as a burden, are more highly skilled than the population of Britain on average: 23% of refugees have a skilled trade compared with 12% of the rest of the UK population, and 22% of refugees are managers or
senior officials compared with 15% of the rest of the UK population (p 62).
• Immigrants are more likely than people born in the UK to be graduates (p 83, Table 4.4).
• Immigrants tend to be young – 91% were of working age in 2004. This redresses the balance of an ageing population, reducing the dependency of the economically inactive on the economically active (p 63).

For more on the selectivity of immigrants, see Chapter Three.

The evidence: Neither immigrants nor minorities take up most space in Britain

The myth: Not enough space and not enough housing because of immigration

• Myth-makers blame problems of population growth on immigrants. But they identify problem populations by ethnicity. Undoubtedly immigration and ethnicity are related but they must not be conflated. Half of all people in minority ethnic groups have been born in the UK and two thirds of immigrants are White (p 57).
• The apparent pressure on space and housing is much more a result of a trend for smaller household sizes and larger houses than it is the result of population growth through immigration (pp 79–80).
• Ethnic minorities are less responsible for this space and housing pressure than the White population. For example:
  • On average, White Britons live in households of 2.3 people whereas Bangladeshis live in households of 4.2 people (p 80, Table 4.1).
  • 30% of White Britons live in one-person households compared with 9% of Bangladeshis (p 80, Table 4.2).
  • White Britons take up three times the land area that Bangladeshis take up (p 80, Table 4.3).
• If the whole population lived in flats, with an average household size of four, without using up any more land than is currently used for housing, 201 million people could be accommodated in Britain (p 80).
• Immigration is not the reason for greenfield development. Residential movement out of cities has been occurring for at least half a century and is not unique to the UK. This counterurbanisation is as much to do with lifestyle choice as it is to do with population pressure.
People are not being pushed to the suburbs and rural areas because of immigrants. There is a stronger case that immigration is a consequence of counterurbanisation as immigrants take on the low-wage jobs and cheap housing that are left in urban centres (pp 81-82).

- MigrationWatchUK claims that England is overcrowded at 390 people per square kilometre but this is very sparse compared with London’s 4,700 people per square kilometre. The population density of the UK (250/sq km) is similar to that of Germany (p 81).

For more on who is really putting pressure on space and housing in Britain, see Chapter Four.

The evidence: Economic bonus of immigration

The myth: Immigrants are an economic burden

- There is consensus – among government, the House of Lords, researchers and even anti-immigration organisations such as MigrationWatchUK – that immigration has an overall positive economic effect in Britain (p 61).
- On average, wage growth is encouraged by immigration. Immigrants are more likely than others to experience employment conditions that do not meet minimum standards (p 61).
- The UK is a net gainer of remittances. That is, more money is sent to the UK from people living abroad than is sent abroad from people living in the UK (pp 61-62).

For more on economic benefits of immigration, see Chapter Three.

The evidence: Immigrants use fewer public services than they pay for

The myth: Immigrants are a burden on the state

- Migrants are self-selective – they are more likely to be young, in good health, well qualified and of high socioeconomic status than people who do not migrate to Britain (p 82).
- Immigrants are more likely to be managers or professionals, and more likely to be graduates, than people born in the UK (p 83, Table 4.4).
- Immigrants contribute more in taxes than they use in benefits and public services (p 84).
• 6% of non-British nationals in Manchester are claiming out-of-work benefit compared with 20% of the total working-age population of the district. The figure for England and Wales as a whole is 8% (p 85).

• Asylum seekers do not have the right to work. They are eligible to apply for accommodation and subsistence support from the National Asylum Support Service but not for other benefits. Since 1993, levels of destitution among asylum seekers have markedly increased (p 85).

For more on why immigrants aren’t a burden, see Chapter Four.

The evidence: Services that respect ethnic diversity are no more costly than other equality services

The myth: The burden of ethnic diversity is too great for service providers

• Responding to diversity of needs is nothing new, and there is no reason for the costs associated with service provision for ethnic diversity to be any more seen as a burden than costs associated with service provision for gender, dietary or any other kind of diversity (p 86).

• If diversity is framed as competition, so that one person’s demands are seen as a threat to others, then the minority easily becomes the scapegoat for more structural problems of scarcity of resources (p 86).

For more on why ethnic diversity isn’t a burden, see Chapter Four.

The evidence: MigrationWatchUK selects its figures to make a political case

The myth: MigrationWatchUK is a reliable source for immigration information and comment

• MigrationWatchUK sustains the myth that there is too much immigration by presenting evidence that is far from balanced, using claims that are factually inaccurate. Its use of immigration figures out of context promotes fear of immigration and of immigrants. MigrationWatchUK does not make clear why it is only population growth through immigration that it considers a problem.
MigrationWatchUK holds political weight due to its acceptance by parts of the media and political elite, not because its logic and statistics hold water (pp 63-69).

- MigrationWatchUK claims that it is only concerned about the balance of migration but is clearly anti-immigration with prejudices against non-Western immigrants (p 66).
- MigrationWatchUK’s claim that 83% of the UK’s population growth is due to immigration is a nonsense calculation – it might as well have said that immigration accounts for 211% of the UK’s growth. MigrationWatchUK chooses the figure that gives it the best headline (pp 65–66).
- MigrationWatchUK’s arguments are founded on the concept that population growth (through immigration) is costly for Britain. But the evidence shows that immigrants are not more costly than others in terms of use of space, housing requirements or benefits claims. And immigrants overall have a positive impact on Britain’s economy (pp 66–69, 78–82).
- MigrationWatchUK argues that the cost of children of immigrants should be taken into account when calculating the economic effect of immigration. But in this logic, at what point – after how many generations – does one stop being an immigrant (p 68)?

For more on MigrationWatchUK’s fanciful footwork with figures, see Chapter Three.

Integration

The evidence: More mixed-ethnicity friendships groups

The myth: More segregated friendship groups

- For most ethnic minority young people, roughly half or more than half of their friends are White (p 96).
- Minorities born in Britain are less likely to have exclusively minority friends than those born outside Britain. This is despite there being twice as many minority young adults (in their twenties) as minority old adults (in their fifties), which could lead to an expectation that young minorities have more friends among minorities than their parents (p 97, Table 5.1).
- Less than 20% of minorities born in Britain have friends only from their own group (p 97).
• White people are the most isolated in their friendships – more than half have only White friends (pp 97-98).
• Neighbourhoods with fewest White people are where people have most ethnically diverse friends – probably because these neighbourhoods have most ethnic diversity among residents (p 97).
• Most people of Mixed ethnic groups have parents of different ethnicities. The growth of the Mixed group is therefore an indicator of the most intimate form of inter-ethnic friendship. There are 650,000 people of Mixed ethnic group in England alone, making it the third largest minority after the Indian and Pakistani groups. It is one of the fastest-growing ethnic groups (p 99).
• Asian Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus all marry out of their own groups just as often as White Christians (p 99).
• When the Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality claimed in 2005 that ‘alarmingly, we showed that young people from ethnic minorities were twice as likely to have a circle of pals exclusively from their own community as were older ethnic minority folk’, he was using a judicious compound of alarmist language and false claim to scientific rigour to create a striking message about friendship groups, unsupported by the evidence, of dangerous inward-looking communities, harbingers of a bleak future for the UK (p 99).

For more on mixed ethnicity friendships, see Chapter Five.

The evidence: Greater tolerance in social attitudes

The myth: A population ‘gripped by fear’ of racial unrest

• British Social Attitudes surveys going back to the 1980s reveal that the White population in Britain is now much more accepting than in the past of having a minority ethnic boss and of a close relative marrying someone from a minority ethnic group (pp 102-103).
• The growth in tolerance is the result of general changes in social attitudes and also due to younger generations being more tolerant than the older generations who they are replacing (pp 102-103).
• International opinion surveys reveal that Britain is more tolerant towards ethnic difference than many other European countries (p 103).
• Local studies have demonstrated that these tolerant attitudes are evident across the country including in Oldham and Bradford, which were affected by ethnic conflict in 2001 (p 104).
• In Oldham, 82% of those aged under 25 were optimistic that people from different ethnic backgrounds could get on well together, compared with 52% of those aged 75 and older (p 104).

For more on ethnicity and social attitudes, see Chapter Five.

The evidence: Desire for mixed schools not being met

The myth: Minorities choose segregated schools

• School ethnic composition is a little more polarised than residential polarisation but the difference is not more than one would expect from social selection by income, and is not growing over time (pp 106-107).
• Headline claims that schools are becoming more segregated than the areas they sit in are not based on evidence (pp 105-106).
• School selection is less associated with ethnicity than with income. It may be that the two types of selection are confounded, that is, selection of schools by the better off results in ethnic selection as a by-product because minorities are generally economically disadvantaged in comparison with White people (pp 106-107).
• School choice does not operate evenly or equally across social groups. Some people are more likely to be allocated the school of their choice than others. Some people’s choices are more restricted, for example by financial means to travel to schools further away or pay for private education (pp 107-108).
• There is a desire for ethnically mixed schools among White and minority families but the operation of the system of school choice is preventing this. School segregation, to the extent that it can be shown to exist, is not a result of desire for self-segregation but a result of a mismatch between choice and outcome. This poses a challenge for schools, which must meet their responsibilities to promote good race relations (pp 107-108).

For more on school choice and mixing, see Chapter Five.
Segregation

The evidence: Minorities want to live in mixed neighbourhoods

The myth: Minorities want to live in segregated neighbourhoods

- Housing aspirations of young people from White and minority ethnic groups are very similar: they all desire safe neighbourhoods with good environments, no anti-social behaviour and to be near to family and friends (p 100).
- Minority youngsters look to live in areas that are ethnically mixed and are not in search of ethnic isolation (pp 100-101).
- Barriers to minorities achieving their preferred housing include racism, lack of affordable housing and housing market structures that may steer people of different ethnicities to live in particular areas (pp 101-102).

For more on the housing aspirations of minority ethnic people, see Chapter Five.

The evidence: Bradford is ethnically mixed with no sign of ghettos, just like the rest of Britain

The myth: Bradford’s experience illustrates how Britain is sleepwalking to segregation

- There are no ghettos in Britain and no change towards ghettos. The case study of Bradford clearly shows that this district, like all others, can by no means be considered to contain a ghetto (pp 122-124).
- Only 3 of the 30 wards in the district of Bradford have 50% or more of their population from ethnic groups other than White (Bradford Moor, University, Toller) and each of these has more than 25% White population. These are mixed areas rather than ghettos of single origin (pp 122-123).
- The number of mixed wards (which are conceptually opposite to ghettos) in Bradford increased from 12 in 1991 to 15 in 2001 (p 123).
- The minority populations in Bradford are growing primarily as a result of more people being born than dying, which is expected from populations with young age structures (such as Pakistani and Bangladeshi populations). In-migration is not the main driver of minority population growth (p 123).
• There is considerable movement of people from minority ethnic groups out of the minority ethnic areas of Bradford, such as University ward, to elsewhere in the UK. In 2000-01, 1,066 minority ethnic residents left the ward for other parts of the UK, while 622 arrived from elsewhere in the UK: 444 more minority residents left than arrived (p 123).

• There is a movement of White populations on balance into the diverse areas of Bradford. In 2000-01, 185 more White residents moved to University ward from other parts of the UK than left it (p 123).

For more on ethnic mixing in Bradford, see Chapter Six.

The evidence: Greater ethnic mixing in neighbourhoods across Britain

The myth: Britain is becoming a country of ghettos

• British population dynamics are not those of ethnic division and separation. The picture of growth, dispersal and mixing seen in Bradford is common across Britain (pp 129-133).

• The White population is by far the most isolated ethnic group. The only concentrations which are anything like ghettos are of White people. At the scale of a few streets, the average White person lives in an area that has more than 94% White people in it. Pakistanis in Britain live in street-level areas that on average have 26% Pakistani residents (p 124).

• There are no very high concentrations of particular ethnic groups, other than White, because the areas with fewest White residents are diverse and becoming more so (pp 124-125).

• The spread of the population of each minority ethnic group has become more even and less clustered over time. This is true at each geographical scale: local authority districts, electoral wards and street-level census areas. This is indicated by the Index of Dissimilarity, which for the minority ethnic population taken as a whole has decreased from 61.4 in 1991 to 58.8 in 2001 (p 126, Table 6.1).

• Academic and government reports (State of the English Cities) agree that residential ethnic clustering has not increased for any city in Britain (pp 125-126).

• Only six districts (out of 408) in Britain contain any ward with more than three quarters minority ethnic residents. Even in the least White ward in Britain – Southall Broadway in the London Borough of Ealing – 12% of the population is White (p 129, Table 6.3).
• Tower Hamlets is the most ethnically mixed district in Britain. All of its wards have at least one quarter White population and one quarter minority ethnic population (p 129, Table 6.3).

• Thousands of wards have a majority White population. Eight wards have a majority of a single minority ethnic group. These wards are in Leicester, Bradford, Pendle, Ealing and Tower Hamlets (p 132, Table 6.3).

• The highest proportion for a single minority group is 74%, the proportion of Indians in the population of the Latimer ward of Leicester. This is far from a ghetto, and cannot be compared with Chicago, where over half the Black population live in neighbourhoods that are more than 90% Black (p 132, Table 6.3).

For more evidence against claims of ghettos, see Chapter Six.

The evidence: Ethnic clustering can and does result from positive causes and has positive consequences

The myth: Residential segregation is a cause and consequence of social breakdown

• Clustering – be it along the lines of ethnicity or class or occupation or any other social indicator – can be a matter of choice as a result of positive affiliations. Negative causes or consequences of clustering cannot be assumed. A distinction should be made between ‘good segregation’ and involuntary segregation that is the result of inequalities and discrimination (p 118).

• Ethnic inequalities are not caused by areas with high proportions of minorities. For example, minority unemployment is double that of White unemployment in areas with mainly White population as well as in areas with less than 50% White population. Social inequality is evident irrespective of ethnic composition, and this inequality should be the focus of concerns (p 135, Table 6.4).

For more about the meaning of residential clustering, see Chapter Six.
The evidence: For terrorists, there’s nothing special about ‘segregated’ areas

The myth: Segregation breeds terrorism

- Muslims are not more likely to be charged with terrorism if they live in areas of Muslim concentration rather than in any other area of Britain (pp 109-110).
- A Muslim from Bradford is no more likely to be a terrorist than a Muslim from Bexley. There is no reason to link particular levels of Muslim concentration with terrorism (p 110).

For more on the association between terrorism and ethnic composition, see Chapter Five.

Population change

The evidence: Larger minority neighbourhoods result from natural growth (less from immigration and not at all from retreat)

The myth: Growth of minority clusters is caused by retreat

- Residential clustering is the result of neither White flight nor minority retreat, but much more benign demographic change, mostly non-racial in character (Chapters Six and Seven).
- Natural change (births minus deaths) adds more to Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi populations in Britain than does immigration (p 149).
- Population growth in areas with large minority ethnic populations is predominantly a result of natural change, that is, more people being born than dying (p 132).
- In the districts with highest minority ethnic population, births add more to the minority population than does immigration or migration from elsewhere in the UK. For example, for minorities during one year (pp 130-131, Table 6.2):
  - in Ealing’s minority concentration there were 431 births and 401 immigrants;
  - in Birmingham’s minority concentration there were 1,411 births and 718 immigrants;
  - in Bradford’s minority concentration there were 403 births and 302 immigrants.
- Family-building is an expected demographic process for population groups that have a young age structure, which is more the case for
Britain’s minority ethnic groups than for the White population (p 151).

For more on demographics of population change, see Chapters Six and Seven.

_The evidence: Shared migration experiences which result in more mixed neighbourhoods_

The myth: White flight and minority retreat

- There is movement out of minority clusters by each minority ethnic group and the White group at similar rates. Dispersal of this kind is evident for each minority ethnic group, for the 1990s and the 2000s, and for districts, wards and street-level neighbourhoods (p 127).
- Indians are leaving Leicester, Caribbeans are leaving Lambeth, Bangladeshis are leaving Tower Hamlets and Pakistanis are leaving Bradford (p 127).
- Minorities are moving away from their concentrations and into areas where they are least concentrated (p 127):
  - The highest Indian concentrations annually lost 0.4% of their Indian population to other parts of the UK.
  - The highest Black concentrations annually lost 1.6% of their Black population to other parts of the UK.
  - The highest Pakistani/Bangladeshi concentrations annually lost 0.3% of their Pakistani/Bangladeshi population to other parts of the UK.
- The highest White concentrations gained the equivalent of 0.2% of their existing White population. The areas with fewest White residents lost 0.5% of their White population (p 127).
- There is White movement into minority concentrations in Leicester, Bradford, Lambeth, Wolverhampton, Wycombe, Manchester and Merton (p 132, Table 6.3).
- In 23 of the 35 minority concentrations in Britain more minorities than the White group moved out to elsewhere in the UK (Table 6.3).
- These patterns have non-racial explanations. They represent aspirational movements reflecting the well-established trends of movement from cities to suburban and more rural areas (counterurbanisation) (pp 127–128).
• Immigration replaces the White population, rather than displaces it. Significant migration out of Leicester began before significant immigration to it (p 128, Table 6.2).
• Comments such as ‘We know that White flight is accelerating’ have no basis in evidence. White and minority groups are moving in the same direction and at the same rate (pp 128–129).

For more on migration patterns, see Chapter Six.

The evidence: Leicester is likely to be the first Minority White City, around 2019

The myth: Leicester will be minority White by 2011, followed by Bradford, Oldham and Birmingham by 2016

• It is possible to project ethnic group populations. Ethnic group population methodology, especially for small areas, is in its infancy and faces many technical and conceptual difficulties. Forecasts can act as a guide to changing needs and can thereby inform policy development (pp 151–155).
• To the extent that it can be predicted, Birmingham’s population will be less than 50% White around 2024, Bradford’s after 2031 and Leicester’s around 2019 (p 147, Table 7.1 and Figure 7.1).
• All the local authorities that have been forecast to have less than 50% White population sometime in the next few decades will remain ethnically mixed with between 25% and 50% White population (p 155).
• Claims from the government equalities body of Leicester’s future population were not based on evidence but on uncritical repetition of unfounded claims made by others (pp 146–149).

For more on minority ethnic population projections, see Chapter Seven.

The evidence: We’re already diverse, and so what?
The myth: Imminent threat of Minority White Cities

• The three elements of the ‘Minority White Cities’ myth do not combine into a concept that has substantive meaning or significance. There is no reason to focus on 50%, on whiteness or on cities as markers of critical change in ethnic diversity (p 144).
‘Minority White City’ associates a White majority with a superior value and a society that is more governable than a diverse one. The concept is racist (pp 144-146).

• The ‘Minority White Cities’ myth has been created by a trail of unsubstantiated claims made by the media and the (former) Commission for Racial Equality (pp 146-149).

• The focus on ‘Minority White Cities’ is a distraction from particular material problems of integration (pp 143-144).

• At sub-city scales there are already areas where White people make up less than half the population, and these are predominantly diverse areas where no one ethnic group dominates (pp 150-151 and Chapter Six). For more on the claims of ‘Minority White Cities’, see Chapter Seven.