

Immigration & Social Policy

1. Concepts & Descriptions (Platt, 2016)

Table 32.1 Census ethnic group categories in England and Wales 1991–2011.

1991	2001	2011
White	<i>White</i> British	<i>White</i> English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/ British (80.5%)
	Irish	Irish (0.9%)
	Any other White background	Gypsy or Traveller (0.1%) Any other White background (4.4%)
Black-Caribbean	<i>Mixed</i>	<i>Mixed/multiple ethnic groups</i>
Black-African	White and Black Caribbean	White and Black Caribbean (0.8%)
Black-Other	White and Black African	White and Black African (0.3%)
Indian	White and Asian	White and Asian (0.6%)
Pakistani	Any other Mixed background	Any other Mixed/multiple ethnic background (0.5%)
Bangladeshi	<i>Asian or Asian British</i>	<i>Asian/Asian British</i>
Chinese	Indian	Indian (2.5%)
Any other ethnic group	Pakistani	Pakistani (2.0%)
	Bangladeshi	Bangladeshi (0.8%)
	Any other Asian background	Chinese (0.7%) Any other Asian background (1.5%)
	<i>Black or Black British</i>	<i>Black/African/Caribbean/Black British</i>
	Caribbean	African (1.8%)
	African	Caribbean (1.1%)
	Any other Black background	Any other Black/African/Caribbean background (0.5%)
	<i>Chinese or other ethnic group</i>	<i>Other ethnic group</i>
	Chinese	Arab (0.4%)
	Any other	Any other ethnic group (0.6%)

Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS). The 'other' categories allowed a write-in response. In 1991, an additional category of 'Other Asian' was constructed from write-in responses and was reported in statistical outputs.

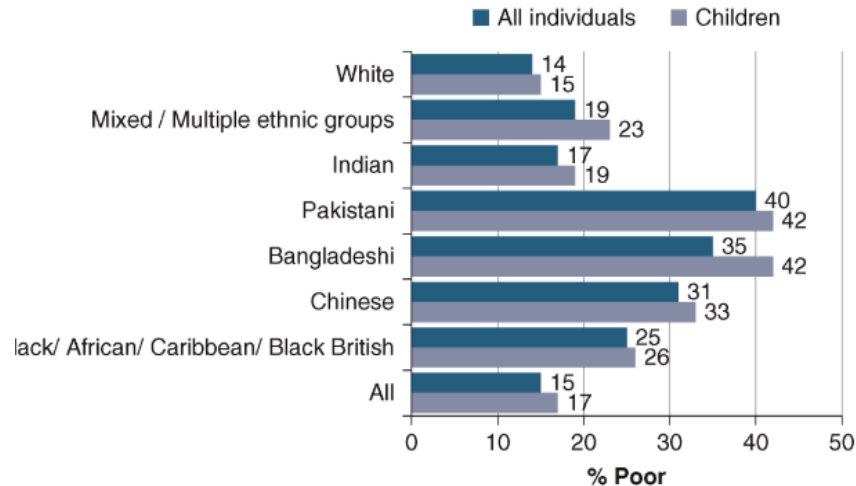
- White British still accounts for the absolute majority (about 85%); ethnic group categories have been diversified over time
- Racism & racialisation: process by which a dominant group constructs others as 'races', mainly physical features & national or religious origins
 - The way ethnic minorities are categorised reflects ethnic distribution as well as majority's perception
 - E.g., different classifications of ethnic groups across countries

- Ethnicity: self-conscious identity shared with others based on belief in common descent (country of origin, language, religion, experiences of colonisation) → often regarded as minority ethnicity
 - Linked to 'cultural racism': intersection of culture & ethnicity
- UK immigration: old (Irish, Jamaican) vs new (Polish) inflows + Asian (Indian, Bangladeshi, Pakistani & Chinese: both old & new arrivals)
 - Recently refugees & asylum seekers (e.g., Channel crossings): mainly people from Southwest Asia (aka. Middle East) via EU open borders
- UK approach: internally inclusive but externally exclusive
 - Many policies & discourses exist to tackle inequalities across ethnic groups (income, health, education) but only for 'legal residents'
 - 'Hostile environment' for the undocumented: limited access to basic services (regulatory checks in workplace, housing, schools, health care, marriage registration, bank services)
 - Deputising immigration control & making (undocumented) immigrants "criminalised, marginalised & precarious" (Griffiths & Yeo, 2021)
 - "Why small boats are a big problem for Britain" The Economist (02.11.2022)
 - "The Cruelty of the British State" The Economist (07.04.2022)

2. Social Inequalities by race & ethnicity

- Minority groups' unemployment risks are higher than white British, but varies substantially across ethnic backgrounds – highest among Black & Caribbeans, relatively low among 'other' whites
- Gender differences in labour force participation across culture & religions
 - i.e., South Asian women (from Muslim background) tend to be more economically inactive
- Higher poverty risk: concentration on low-paid or precarious occupations; discrimination in labour markets; exclusion from welfare rights
 - Immigrant & ethnic minority households much more likely to be below poverty line in the UK, US & Europe (Morissens & Sainsbury, 2005)

- Less likely to receive pensions & unemployment benefits (due to contribution requirements), more likely to receive social assistance (means-tested)



3. Social Policy and Welfare States for Immigrants

- Immigrants concentrated on young age groups & families: net contributors to pensions & health insurance, but net beneficiaries of child & family benefits (also related to higher fertility rates), social assistance, social housing (related to social disadvantages)
- Not many 'explicit' social policies for immigrants (apart from refugee aids)
 - The key question is whether existing social policies are inclusive to immigrants, though the recent 'retrenchment' may be partly targeting immigrants to restrict access.
- The notion of social citizenship: how should citizenship be defined?
 - Citizenship may be granted based on human rights vs ethnicity; contribution to the social system; years of residence or place of birth?
- Conventional welfare regime typology (Esping-Andersen 1990) does not hold when limiting analysis to migrants (i.e., Denmark no longer social democratic - low decommodification for migrants)
- Need to look at who are eligible for each policy case, rather than assuming uniform approvals or objections

- Contributory (social insurance) systems: access to benefit requires minimum contribution record, benefits are proportional to contributions → immigrants are often naturally excluded or receive low level of benefits
- Means-tested social assistance: disadvantaged immigrants eligible, but depends on citizenship status (not just documented/undocumented status but also minimum required years of legal residency)
- Universal benefits / social services: depends on citizenship status & recognition of social rights of immigrants – i.e., NHS & free education available also for foreigners with residence permit
- In liberal welfare states, private/occupational welfare benefits (US health insurance; UK pensions & maternity leave) account for a large proportion
 - Immigrants excluded despite high LM participation, because they are mostly in 'precarious' or unstable jobs (=labour market outsiders)
 - US 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act: immigrants barred from various types of entitlements during the first five years of residency
 - UK social assistance & means-tested tax credits: sponsored immigrants are barred for the first 5 years; EU nationals' access to benefits is conditional to 12 month working since 2004 EU enlargement
- Does immigration undermine public support for social policy?
 - Comparatively, no significant negative association between net inflow of migration & support for social policy (Brady & Finnigan, 2014)
 - Rather, immigration may increase public support for social policy, due to increased competition & unemployment risk (compensation)
 - But immigration can undermine support for universalist social policy or social policy that particularly benefits immigrants (welfare chauvinism)
- Welfare state institutions partly explain British public support for 'border control' & Brexit (Ruhs, 2017)
 - High proportion of non-contributory benefits & flexible labour markets, mainly attracting low-skilled workers
 - Creates short-term fiscal costs & related to the perception of 'fairness'

- However, evidence shows that EU migrants are net contributors than beneficiaries (Hantrais et al., 2019), less using public services than the UK-born.