

## What do we know about social interaction and spatial integration and what are the key emerging issues?

Mixing of groups defined by migrant origin or ethnicity has long been seen as an indicator of integration, representing societal cohesion, equality of opportunity and lack of racism or discrimination. Mixing has traditionally been conceived in terms of neighbourhoods and residential integration; more recently mixing in workplaces, schools and social environments have been considered with recognition that inter-group relationships are not only forged in residential environments.

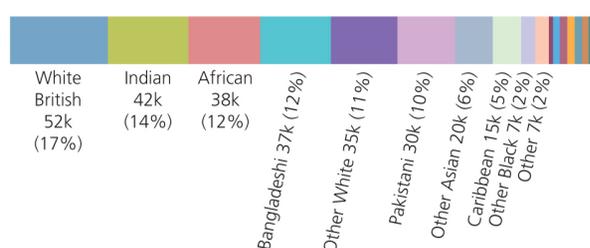
This briefing draws on work of the ESRC Centre on Dynamics of Ethnicity (CoDE)<sup>1</sup> to make four points about spatial integration and social interaction:

- Inter-ethnic mixing is widespread and increasing.
- Diverse neighbourhoods can elicit strong sense of belonging.
- Socio-economic inequalities are a critical barrier to inter-ethnic mixing and social interaction.
- Future work should focus on understanding the causes and consequences of mixing, particularly barriers to mixing and what type of mixing matters.

### Residential ethnic mixing is widespread and increasing

Mixing between ethnic groups in neighbourhoods, households and partnerships has increased over the last two decades.<sup>2</sup> This is evidenced by census data, the best source for quantitative description of neighbourhoods by ethnicity. For each ethnic group that is comparable across censuses, segregation between districts across England and Wales (as measured by the Dissimilarity Index) decreased. The same is found for the residential distribution of ethnic minorities between neighbourhoods: the spread became more even over the 2000s.<sup>3</sup> In addition, diversity – the mix of ethnic groups in districts – has increased. This is well illustrated by Newham's ethnic mix, the most diverse in Britain (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Newham - Britain's most ethnically diverse local authority<sup>4</sup>

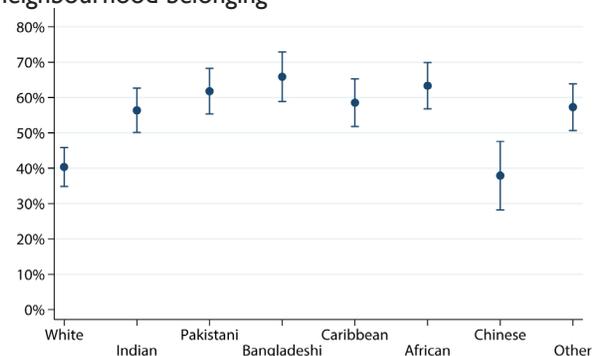


Mixing is increasing in other arenas too: 1 in 8 households has more than one ethnic group (excluding households with only one person); and survey data show that half or more of each ethnic group has friends from a different ethnic group (Figure 3).<sup>5</sup>

### Minorities and diverse neighbourhoods have high levels of belonging

There has been policy concern that diverse areas lack cohesion and social capital.<sup>6</sup> In a UK context this has been queried and, indeed, ethnic minority groups, including in diverse neighbourhoods, have been found to have high levels of neighbourhood belonging.<sup>7</sup> Diverse areas can be strong examples of cohesive community.

Figure 2: Ethnic groups' probability of feeling very strong neighbourhood belonging<sup>8</sup>

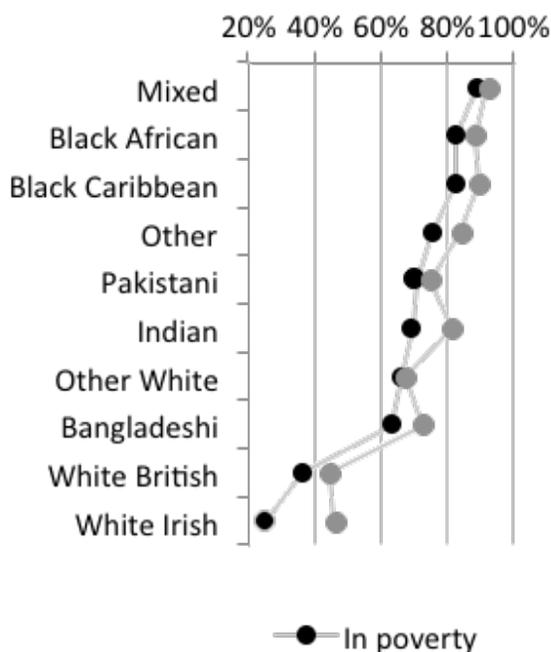


## Socio-economic inequalities are a critical barrier to inter-ethnic mixing and social interaction

Where people are able to live, in terms of neighbourhood and housing, is influenced by their socio-economic circumstances and thus reflects socio-economic inequalities. There are stark and persistent ethnic inequalities in socio-economics as, for example, shown by unemployment rates and educational attainment.<sup>9</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that ethnic minorities are most likely to live in deprived neighbourhoods<sup>10</sup> and are least likely to be home owners.<sup>11</sup>

Being in deprivation also affects ability to mix because there are costs associated with building and maintaining social networks. Figure 3 shows that those in poverty are least likely to have ethnically mixed social networks, for all ethnic groups

Figure 3: Percent of ethnic groups with a mixed ethnic group friendship network, by poverty status<sup>12</sup>



## Summary and emerging issues

What we know about social interaction and spatial mixing presents a positive message for integration. However, two foci for future work

can be identified, about which relatively little is understood. These focus on the causes and consequences of mixing. More evidence is needed on, first, what barriers to mixing exist, including socio-economic inequalities and racism; and second, in what settings, and what kind of mixing matters, for what social outcomes.

1. [www.ethnicity.ac.uk](http://www.ethnicity.ac.uk).
2. Simpson, L. (2012) 'More segregation or more mixing?' *Dynamics of Diversity: Evidence from the 2011 Census CoDE/JRF*.
3. Catney, G. (2013) 'Has neighbourhood ethnic segregation decreased?' *Dynamics of Diversity: Evidence from the 2011 Census CoDE/JRF*.
4. Simpson, L. (2013) 'Does Britain have plural cities?' *Dynamics of Diversity: Evidence from the 2011 Census CoDE/JRF*.
5. Finney, N., Kapadia, D. and Peters, S. (forthcoming, 2014), *How are poverty, ethnicity and social networks related?* York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation; using *Understanding Society Wave 3*.
6. For example, for the USA: Putnam RD. (2007) 'E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Community in the 21st Century: The 2006 Johan Skytte Prize Lecture'. *Scandinavian Political Studies* 30:137-174.
7. Finney, N. and Jivraj, S. (2013) 'Ethnic group population change and neighbourhood belonging in Britain' *Urban Studies* DOI: 10.1177/0042098013482497.
8. Based on Finney and Jivraj (2013) using Citizenship Survey 2005. Model predicts very strong neighbourhood belonging taking into account ethnic group, age, sex, NS-SEC, marital status, years living in neighbourhood, year of survey, region, percentage of own ethnic group in neighbourhood, deprivation of ward, DEFRA urban-rural indicator age structure of ward, immigration rate of ward, gross internal migration rate of ward.
9. Kapadia and Nazroo (2013) 'Ethnic inequalities in labour market participation' *Dynamics of Diversity: Evidence from the 2011 Census CoDE/JRF*; Lymperopoulou and Parameshwaran (2014) 'How are ethnic inequalities in education changing?' *Dynamics of Diversity: Evidence from the 2011 Census CoDE/JRF*.
10. Jivraj, S. and Khan, O. (2013) 'Ethnicity and deprivation in England' *Dynamics of Diversity: Evidence from the 2011 Census CoDE/JRF*.
11. Finney, N. and Harries, B. (2013) 'Which ethnic groups are disproportionately affected by the rise in private renting? Ethnic differences in housing 1991-2001-2011' *Dynamics of Diversity: Evidence from the 2011 Census CoDE/JRF*.
12. Finney, Kapadia and Peters (forthcoming 2014).

**About the author.** Nissa Finney is Lecturer in Social Statistics and member of the Cathie Marsh Institute for Social Research (CMIST) at the University of Manchester; and a member of the ESRC Centre on Dynamics of Ethnicity (CoDE).