
THE USE OF AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES (ICT) BY PEOPLE FROM BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS LIVING IN DEPRIVED AREAS

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Background

This is a summary of the findings of a survey and supplementary case study research into the awareness, ownership and use of ICT by people from minority ethnic groups living in six deprived urban areas of Britain. The research was commissioned following the Social Exclusion Unit's PAT (Policy Action Team) 15 report on ICT use in deprived areas, and was conducted by a team of researchers from the University of Warwick and the University of Leeds on behalf of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES).

The main purpose of the research was to collect baseline information to inform policy makers and practitioners about differentials in access to, usage of and attitudes towards, ICT between minority ethnic groups compared to White groups living in deprived areas with a concentration of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups.

Key findings

- Many of the variations in levels of ICT awareness, ownership and use were accounted for by demographic, household structure and economic factors. However, there were also ethnic group factors in levels of access to and use of ICT in deprived communities.
- Being from a Black ethnic group (used here to refer collectively to African and Caribbean people) was a significant factor in lack of ownership of a PC and (non) use of the internet at home, even after economic factors were accounted for. The barrier of cost, related to economic position and income, can account for relatively low levels of PC ownership among respondents from Black ethnic groups.
- After controlling for other factors, like age, South Asian people were significantly less likely than other groups to have experience of using the internet. They were also significantly less likely to have formal training in ICT skills. Twenty-five per cent of South Asian non-PC users reported that problems reading and writing in English prevented them from using a PC, and there was evidence that some women from this ethnic group were additionally disadvantaged by cultural factors, especially in their use of public ICT facilities.
- 63 per cent of people, both from BME and White groups, reported that they had non-existent or beginner-level ICT skills. Overall, levels of ICT skill did not differ greatly between different ethnic groups.
- The primary motivating factors for developing ICT skills were related to employment and employability. Those who had undertaken ICT training most commonly cited reasons linked to employability.
- The most common use of a PC at home was for own study or learning and computers were regarded as important for study and work by all ethnic groups. BME respondents were more likely to have used a home PC for educational purposes than the White group.

Methodology

A mixture of quantitative and qualitative research methods was used. A national survey of 1,182 Black and ethnic minority and 391 White households was conducted within six urban areas in Britain which were classified as deprived (using the Index of Multiple Deprivation) with a high concentration of ethnic minority groups (from 1991 Census). These areas were Inner London, Outer London, Birmingham, Leeds/Bradford, Cardiff and Glasgow. The survey was conducted by MORI between April and June 2002.

The survey was supplemented by local case studies undertaken in the West Midlands and West Yorkshire, and included focus groups and 118 qualitative household interviews. The emphasis on areas of high BME concentration means that this research does not reflect general patterns of access and use for BME groups in the United Kingdom, nor BME groups living in deprived areas with a predominantly White population.

Findings

Awareness

Relatively low awareness of newer technologies was particularly the case with South Asian and Black respondents. For example, awareness of PDAs was 46 per cent and 54 per cent for these groups respectively, compared to 66 per cent among the White group. Being South Asian was also a significant predictor of PC awareness - South Asian respondents were less likely to be aware of PC technology than other groups after controlling for other factors.

Age was the main predictor of awareness of PCs. Economic position and skill level were significant factors, irrespective of ethnic group. Location was also a significant factor in its own right (people living outside London were more likely to be aware of PCs).

Ownership and Availability within the Home

In the sampled population there were no large differences in general ownership levels of ICT between the White group and the aggregated BME group, and no marked differences by ethnic group in the age of PCs where they were owned.

However, PC ownership among South Asian (42 per cent), Chinese and Other (44 per cent) and Mixed

(41 per cent) groups was higher than ownership levels of both White and Black groups (37 per cent and 31 per cent respectively).

Respondents of South Asian origin were more likely to own a digital TV (includes terrestrial digital) than other groups (47 per cent compared to an overall BME group figure of 43 per cent and a figure of 39 per cent for White respondents).

Controlling for other factors, like household type and income, Black people were less likely than people from other ethnic groups to own a PC. Economic position was the main predictor of PC ownership, with unemployed and economically inactive people least likely to own a PC. Other significant factors were income level and household type, particularly the presence of children in the household.

After controlling for other factors, Black and South Asian people were still less likely than White people in these communities to have used home Internet access. Other significant factors were economic position and income.

Experience of Using ICT

Age was the main predictor of probability of having used a PC (pensioners were very unlikely to have used one). Other significant factors were economic position and skill level.

There were some differences between ethnic groups in the sampled population in experience of using a PC. Respondents of Mixed parentage and from Chinese & Other groups reported the highest levels of experience of use across the range of named ICT items, while respondents from South Asian groups reported lower levels of experience than other ethnic groups. Being South Asian was a significant predictor of PC use, after controlling for other factors.

Only 38 per cent of South Asian respondents and 40 per cent of Black respondents had used the Internet, compared to 45 per cent of White respondents, 54 per cent of Chinese and Other respondents and 61 per cent of respondents from the Mixed parentage group. After controlling for other factors, being South Asian, or from a Chinese and Other group were significant predictors of *use of the Internet*.

Use of the Internet at home was lowest for Black respondents (22 per cent) and highest for respondents with Mixed parentage (38 per cent) and Chinese and Other groups (35 per cent). For White respondents this figure was 31 per cent and

for South Asian respondents it was 26 per cent. After controlling for other factors, being Black was significant in predicting probability of using the Internet at home.

Experience of using ICT was greater for respondents in households with children than those in households without children. This was a stronger pattern for White respondents with children (63 per cent had used the Internet) than for BME respondents with children (40 per cent had used the Internet). Levels of use for those without children were very similar between White and BME groups.

Use of PCs at Home

The most common use for a PC at home was for own study or learning (70 per cent of respondents reported this). Use of email and surfing the web were the next most common activities (60 per cent for both). BME respondents were more likely to have used a home PC for educational purposes than White respondents (73 per cent compared to 61 per cent).

There was little difference between White and BME groups regarding the proportions using their PC to help children with their homework.

In contrast, White respondents were more likely than respondents from BME groups to report using their home PC for all other purposes, including:

- leisure activities (68 per cent, compared to 50 per cent),
- e-mailing (66 per cent compared to 57 per cent)
- web surfing (72 per cent compared to 56 per cent),
- Buying goods and services (42 per cent, compared to 25 per cent).

After controlling for other factors, South Asian people were less likely than other people to *use a home PC for leisure or for email*.

A greater proportion of White respondents than BME respondents had used a home PC to access statutory service provision. 26 per cent of Black respondents and 20 per cent of South Asian respondents had done this compared to 34 per cent of White respondents.

A higher proportion of respondents from BME than from the White group had used the Internet to access information of relevance to ethnic/religious

background (21 per cent of BME group users compared to 9 per cent of White).

Local Provision, Awareness and Use of ICT outside the Home

Overall, awareness of either 'UK online centres' or 'learnirect' brands was 53 per cent, though 64 per cent of respondents in the sample as a whole reported that they were aware of public computer facilities, with the local public library most often cited. Highest levels of awareness were among younger people and respondents with Mixed parentage. Of all ethnic groups, awareness was lowest among South Asian respondents, though this was still relatively high (60 per cent).

46 per cent of the total sample had used a public access facility. This was most likely to be a school or college (34 per cent) or a library (26 per cent). Young people were most likely to have used public access facilities. Levels of use of public ICT access facilities were broadly similar for White, South Asian and Black groups, and were higher for the Mixed parentage and Chinese and Other groups.

After controlling for other factors, like age, being South Asian was a significant factor in non-use of public Internet facilities. Other significant predictors of using/not using public Internet facilities were economic position, skill level and age.

Barriers and Facilitators to the Use and Ownership of ICT

The main reasons cited for not using a PC were lack of computer literacy (48 per cent) and lack of interest (41 per cent).

Lack of interest/need was the main reason given by White non-users (60 per cent), compared to only a third of those from Black, South Asian and Mixed groups. Lack of interest/need was particularly prevalent among older age groups.

25 per cent of South Asian non-PC users reported that problems in reading and writing in English prevented them from using a PC. This was not a significant issue for other groups. Controlling for other factors, having poor English language ability was a significant predictor of not having used a PC.

Cost was cited by a relatively higher percentage of Mixed parentage, Chinese and Other and Black respondents compared to other groups (58 per cent, 38 per cent and 47 per cent respectively cited this). For White and South Asian groups this was reported as a problem for 26 per cent and 28 per

cent of non-users. However, statistical analysis did not reveal ethnic group membership in its own right as a factor in reporting cost as a barrier.

63 per cent of the overall sample reported that they had non-existent or beginner-level ICT skills, though 80 per cent said that computer skills were essential to children. Overall, reported ICT skill levels were similar between White, South Asian and Black ethnic groups, but higher for mixed and Chinese and Other groups.

Training in computer skills was most often undertaken for reasons linked to employability (i.e. for 'developing skills', 'to succeed at work' or 'to get a new job'). Respondents from the South Asian group were less likely to have undertaken ICT training than those from other BME groups.

The most common reasons for non-use of public facilities were not wanting or not needing to use the facilities (32 per cent and 30 per cent of non-users). This was especially the case for White respondents and older respondents. After controlling for factors like age, South Asian people were significantly less likely than other groups to use public facilities.

In line with findings, above, about barriers to the use of PCs, 25 per cent of BME respondents gave lack of skills in English as a reason for non-use of public facilities. There were indications from interviews that gender may also act as a barrier for some Muslim women.

Evidence from qualitative interviews indicates the importance of localised provision for public ICT access in order to encourage BME groups to use facilities. There were mixed views about the importance of targeting provision towards specific ethnic groups or age groups.

Conclusions

Many of the differences in levels of ICT access and use can be accounted for by age, household structure and income. However, ethnic group was also a factor in ICT access and use in its own right. In some key aspects South Asian and Black groups emerge as disadvantaged - particularly South Asian women. The Mixed parentage group is relatively advantaged though this may reflect its younger age profile. People across all ethnic groups are aware of the importance and role of ICT training, but language and computer literacy represented barriers to this to some extent.

Recommendations

- There is evidence to suggest that there is scope for further development of combined basic skills and/or language (ESOL) and computer literacy training to meet the needs of BME groups in deprived communities.
- In order to promote training in, and use of, ICT it is important to build on those aspects that people value - including ability to help children with their studies, improving employment prospects and social interaction at publicly provided ICT facilities.
- In order to meet a diversity of client preferences/requirements, there is scope for promoting networking amongst local providers, to co-ordinate provision and promote each other's services.

As this research focuses on areas with a high BME concentration, there is a need to consider both the experiences of more dispersed BME groups where targeted provision is more difficult and comparison research in deprived communities with predominantly White populations.

Copies of the full report (RR450) - priced £4.95 - are available by writing to DfES Publications, PO Box 5050, Sherwood Park, Annesley, Nottingham NG15 0DJ.

Cheques should be made payable to "DfES Priced Publications".

Copies of this Research Brief (RB450) are available free of charge from the above address (tel: 0845 60 222 60). Research Briefs and Research Reports can also be accessed at <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/>

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