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1991 Census Statistical Paper No 2

ETHNIC MINORITIES IN GREAT BRITAIN:
Age and gender structure

David Owen

February 1993

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by

David Owen

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Contents	<i>Page</i>
Table of contents	i
List of tables	ii
List of figures	ii
1. Introduction	1
2. Gender structure, 1991	1
3. Age structure, 1991	2
4. Age and gender, 1991	5
5. Population Change, 1981-91	7
6. Regional variations in age and gender structure of ethnic minorities, 1981 and 1991	10
7. Conclusions	12
Notes and references	13
Appendix	

Table	<i>Page</i>
1 Gender balance of ethnic groups in Great Britain, 1991	2
2 Age breakdown of ethnic groups in Great Britain, 1991	3
3 Ethnic group share of each age group in Great Britain, 1991	4
4 Dependency ratios for ethnic groups in Great Britain, 1991	5
5 Median age of males and females by ethnic group in Great Britain, 1991	6
6 Estimated population of Great Britain by ethnic group, 1981 and 1989-91	9
7 Change in persons resident in households headed by a person born in the New Commonwealth, 1981-91	10
8 Gender ratios and median ages of ethnic minorities by region, 1981 and 1991	11

Figure	<i>Page</i>
Entire Population	8
Ethnic Minorities	8
Black people	8
South Asians	8
Chinese and others	8
A.1 White people	Appendix page 1
A.2 Black-Caribbeans	" " 1
A.3 Black-Africans	" " 1
A.4 Black-Others	" " 1
A.5 Indian people	" " 2
A.6 Pakistani people	" " 2
A.7 Bangladeshi people	" " 2
A.8 Chinese people	" " 2
A.9 Other-Asians	" " 2
A.10 Other-Others	" " 2

1. Introduction

In 1991, there were just over 3 million people from ethnic minorities resident in Great Britain¹. The emergence of non-white ethnic minority population groups in the UK has largely been a phenomenon of the post-Second World War period. The growth of this population was initially due to in-migration from the New Commonwealth, but since the mid-1970s, the main influence upon its growth has been the increasing number of children born in Britain to parents from minority ethnic groups. While the ethnic minority population has continued to grow, the increase in the British population has slowed over the past two decades. Thus, the age structure of ethnic minority groups is very different from that of white people, and the overall average of 5.5 per cent of the population from minority ethnic groups varies considerably between age groups.

The detailed results of the 1991 Census of Population have recently become available, enabling such variations in ethnic composition of the population to be studied. The availability of computer-readable data files for each of the 67 counties and Scottish Regions in Great Britain greatly facilitate timely analysis of the population to be undertaken. This paper is the second in a series which contrasts the characteristics of the ten major ethnic groups distinguished by the Census. *Statistical Paper 1* demonstrated the considerable degree of spatial concentration of ethnic minorities within Britain; this paper extends the analysis of census data by focussing upon contrasts in age and gender composition between each ethnic group.

2. Gender structure, 1991

The process of international migration often tends to be selective with respect to gender. For many immigrant groups, men are the first to migrate to a new country, being joined by their wives and families later, when the migrant is economically established. As a consequence, ethnic groups with a more recent history of immigration might be expected to have a higher ratio of males to females than the white population and longer established ethnic minorities, for whom the population structure has had time for a more equal mixture of males and females to develop.

Table 1 presents the overall gender balance among the ten ethnic groups identified by the Census for Great Britain. Females are in the majority in the total population, while there are nearly equal numbers of males and females in the ethnic minority population as a whole. This masks considerable variation between ethnic groups. The lowest ratios of males to females are displayed by Other Asians, Black-Caribbeans, and white people. The most striking feature of the table is the excess of males over females for all South Asian ethnic groups. The most extreme excess occurs for Bangladeshis, amongst whom the number of males is over 9 per cent greater than that of females. In part, this reflects the youthful age structure of these ethnic groups (since women have a longer life expectancy than men and hence are in the majority in the oldest age groups) but the youthful Black-Other category has an excess of females. The summary comparison with the gender balance of the population living in households headed by persons born in the New Commonwealth in 1981 suggests that the ethnic minority population has become more balanced in its gender composition over the decade 1981-91 (though the data does not exist for a direct comparison to be made for this population group).

Table 1: Gender balance of ethnic groups in Great Britain, 1991

Ethnic Group	Persons (000s)	Males (000s)	Females (000s)	Males per 1000 females
White	51,873.8	25,066.4	26,807.4	935
<i>All ethnic minorities</i>	3,015.1	1,508.6	1,506.5	1001
<i>Black</i>	890.7	433.8	456.9	949
Black-Caribbean	500.0	239.5	260.5	919
Black-African	212.4	106.8	105.6	1012
Black-Other	178.4	87.5	90.9	963
<i>South Asian</i>	1,479.6	753.4	726.2	1037
Indian	840.3	422.9	417.4	1013
Pakistani	476.6	245.6	231.0	1063
Bangladeshi	162.8	84.9	77.9	1091
<i>Chinese and others</i>	644.7	321.4	323.3	994
Chinese	156.9	77.7	79.3	980
Other Asians	197.5	93.6	103.9	901
Other - Other	290.2	150.1	140.1	1071
Entire population	54,888.8	26,575.0	28,313.9	939
Population in New Commonwealth-headed households, 1981	2,148.9	1,099.8	1,049.1	1048

Source: CRE 1981 Census Special Tabulations and 1991 Census Local Base Statistics (ESRC purchase); Crown Copyright.

3. Age structure, 1991

Overall, Great Britain, in common with most other Western European countries, has an ageing population. The life expectancy of the population is increasing, while average birth rates have fallen to a relatively low level. This means that while the number of elderly people has been growing, the number of young people entering the labour market has fallen; both these aggregate trends are forecast to continue in the medium term.

However, these average demographic characteristics are not shared by all ethnic groups in Britain. The birth rates to mothers from ethnic minority groups are considerably higher than those for the white population, though they are now declining. Moreover, death rates for people born in the New Commonwealth have been lower than those for white people, though they have tended to rise. Taken with the recent immigration of many members of ethnic minority groups, the age structure of ethnic minority populations would be expected to be very different from the white population, with a greater representation of young people and children.

Table 2 presents the breakdown of the ten ethnic groups into broad age categories for Great Britain as a whole, corresponding the pre-school ages (0-4), school children (5-15), young adults (16-24), the main working age groups and the elderly population (65 and over). The relative youth of ethnic minorities is immediately apparent. Children form a third of the ethnic minority population, compared to under a fifth of the white population. In contrast, the proportion of ethnic minorities aged over 45 was far smaller than that for white people. While 16 per cent of the population as a whole is now aged over 65, only just over 3 per cent of the ethnic minority population falls within this age group.

There are substantial variations in age structure between ethnic minority groups. Amongst Blacks, those of Caribbean origin tend to be older than those of African origin and "Black-others", and indeed the former group has a higher proportion of people aged 65 and above than any minority group. In contrast, "Black-others" is the most youthful ethnic group of all, with over 90 per cent aged under 45, and half aged 0-15; "Other-others" have a similar but less extreme age structure. These "Other" ethnic groups comprise those people who have recorded themselves as "Black British" (in the "Black-Other" group) together with smaller ethnic minority groups and a range of "mixed" ethnic groups.² Indians have the most elderly age structure of all the South Asian ethnic groups, but children still account for a substantially higher proportion of their population than the British average, and the great majority of Indians are aged under 45. Children account for a much larger proportion of all Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, with nearly a third of each ethnic group of school age in 1991. In contrast, the bulk of Chinese and "Other Asians" are of working age, primarily in the 25-44 age group.

Table 2: Age breakdown of ethnic groups in Great Britain, 1991

Ethnic Group	Total Population	Percentage of total population					
		Aged 0-4	Aged 5-15	Aged 16-24	Aged 25-44	Aged 45-64	Aged 65+
White	51,873.8	6.36	12.97	12.55	29.01	22.32	16.80
<i>All ethnic minorities</i>	<i>3,015.1</i>	<i>11.10</i>	<i>21.94</i>	<i>16.06</i>	<i>32.49</i>	<i>15.18</i>	<i>3.22</i>
<i>Black</i>	<i>890.7</i>	<i>11.12</i>	<i>18.28</i>	<i>16.11</i>	<i>33.27</i>	<i>17.43</i>	<i>3.79</i>
Black-Caribbean	500.0	7.56	14.33	14.87	32.74	24.85	5.65
Black-African	212.4	11.83	17.51	16.61	42.17	10.40	1.48
Black-Other	178.4	20.28	30.27	19.01	24.18	4.97	1.29
<i>South Asian</i>	<i>1,479.6</i>	<i>10.89</i>	<i>24.82</i>	<i>16.19</i>	<i>30.21</i>	<i>14.89</i>	<i>2.99</i>
Indian	840.3	8.81	20.74	15.19	34.61	16.60	4.06
Pakistani	476.6	13.13	29.52	17.47	25.79	12.35	1.73
Bangladeshi	162.8	15.06	32.17	17.60	20.46	13.51	1.20
<i>Chinese and others</i>	<i>644.7</i>	<i>11.57</i>	<i>20.39</i>	<i>15.70</i>	<i>36.65</i>	<i>12.72</i>	<i>2.98</i>
Chinese	156.9	7.09	16.25	17.86	41.17	14.25	3.38
Other Asians	197.5	8.02	16.39	14.72	43.48	15.04	2.36
Other - Other	290.2	16.40	25.34	15.20	29.55	10.31	3.20
Entire population	54,888.8	6.62	13.46	12.74	29.20	21.93	16.05

Source: 1991 Census Local Base Statistics (ESRC purchase); Crown Copyright.

An alternative way of looking at the contrasts in age structure is presented in Table 3. Here, the share of each age group accounted for by each ethnic group is presented. The aim of this table is to demonstrate more clearly how particular ethnic minorities are relatively more prominent in different sections of the British population. Clearly, white people dominate all age groups, but they form a higher proportion of the older age groups and a smaller proportion of younger age groups than for the population as a whole. Conversely, the proportion of the population accounted for by each ethnic minority group declines with age. The main exception to this are the "Black-Caribbeans", whose share of the total population is fairly constant in all age groups up to retirement age. The share of South Asians in the population is highest for 0-15 year olds, with the fall in percentage share with age being more rapid for Pakistanis and Bangladeshis than for Indians. The Chinese and Other Asian share of the population is greatest in the younger economically active age groups.

Table 3: Ethnic group share of each age group in Great Britain, 1991

Ethnic Group	Overall share of population (%)	Percentage of total population					
		Aged 0-4	Aged 5-15	Aged 16-24	Aged 25-44	Aged 45-64	Aged 65+
White	94.5	90.79	91.05	93.07	93.89	96.20	98.90
<i>All ethnic minorities</i>	5.5	9.21	8.95	6.93	6.11	3.80	1.10
<i>Black</i>	1.6	2.73	2.20	2.05	1.85	1.29	0.38
Black-Caribbean	0.9	1.04	0.97	1.06	1.02	1.03	0.32
Black-African	0.4	0.69	0.50	0.50	0.56	0.18	0.04
Black-Other	0.3	1.00	0.73	0.48	0.27	0.07	0.03
<i>South Asian</i>	2.7	4.43	4.97	3.43	2.79	1.83	0.50
Indian	1.5	2.04	2.36	1.82	1.81	1.16	0.39
Pakistani	0.9	1.72	1.90	1.19	0.77	0.49	0.09
Bangladeshi	0.3	0.68	0.71	0.41	0.21	0.18	0.02
<i>Chinese and others</i>	1.2	2.05	1.78	1.45	1.47	0.68	0.22
Chinese	0.3	0.31	0.35	0.40	0.40	0.19	0.06
Other Asians	0.4	0.44	0.44	0.42	0.54	0.25	0.05
Other - Other	0.5	1.31	1.00	0.63	0.54	0.25	0.11
Entire population	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: 1991 Census Local Base Statistics (ESRC purchase); Crown Copyright.

The age structure data can also be expressed in the form of a *dependency ratio*. This is the ratio of the 'dependent' sectors of the population - children and old people - to the population of working age. It may be regarded as measuring the 'burden' of the old and young upon the age group which contains those people of working age and the primary bearers of family responsibilities. Overall, the population in the non-productive age groups is nearly two-thirds the size of the population of working age. This varies considerably between ethnic groups, as does the contribution of children and old people to the overall dependency ratio (Table 4).

Amongst white people, the contribution of children and the elderly to the dependency ratio is about equal. In contrast, the dependency ratios for ethnic minorities are largely determined by the size of the child population, with the exception of Black-Caribbeans. Dependency ratios are lowest for the Other-Asians, Chinese, Black-Caribbeans and Black-Africans, at about a two-fifths of the population of working age. The ratio rises to over 50 per cent for Indians, over 80 per cent for Pakistanis and Other-others, with the extremes being displayed by Bangladeshis and Black-others, for whom there are as many or more dependents as persons of working age. This pattern partly reflects variations in family size between ethnic groups, but the result for Black-others may indicate a preference for children born in the UK to be identified as simply "Black" or "Black British" rather than "Black-Caribbean" or "Black-African".

Table 4: Dependency ratios for ethnic groups in Great Britain, 1991

Ethnic Group	Child dependency rate	Elderly dependency rate	Total dependency rate
White	31.6	32.0	63.6
<i>All ethnic minorities</i>	52.8	6.9	59.7
<i>Black</i>	45.0	8.0	53.0
Black-Caribbean	31.2	11.3	42.5
Black-African	42.7	2.8	45.5
Black-Other	105.8	3.5	109.3
<i>South Asian</i>	59.2	6.6	65.9
Indian	45.4	8.2	53.6
Pakistani	77.7	4.5	82.2
Bangladeshi	92.3	3.1	95.4
<i>Chinese and others</i>	49.8	6.1	55.9
Chinese	32.4	6.2	38.6
Other Asians	33.7	4.5	38.2
Other - Other	76.9	7.4	84.4
Entire population	32.8	30.6	63.4

Source: 1991 Census Local Base Statistics (ESRC purchase); Crown Copyright.

4. Age and gender, 1991

Both the gender and age group analyses present a partial analysis of the differences in the demographic structures of the various ethnic groups. Table 5 provides a summary of the overall differences in gender and age structure through contrasting the median ages of males and females in each ethnic group and provides information about the influence of country of birth upon age structure.

This table clearly demonstrates the tendency for women to live longer than men; the median age of females is three years higher than that of males in the population as a whole, at nearly 38. The median age of white people is nearly a year greater than the aggregate figure. In contrast, the median age of people from ethnic minorities is just over 25, with very little difference between genders. Black people as a whole are slightly older and South Asians slightly younger, whilst amongst the 'Chinese and other' group males are considerably older and females considerably younger than the overall ethnic minority figure. There are striking differences within the three broad ethnic minority categories. The median age of Black-Caribbeans is about twice that of Black-Others, and there is a similar difference in the median ages of Indians and Bangladeshis.

The oldest ethnic minority people on average are from the Black-Caribbean, Other Asian, Chinese and Indian ethnic groups, for all of whom the median age is near 30. The very young median ages of Black-Others, Bangladeshis, Pakistanis, and Other-others is striking. For the former pair, about half their populations are of school age or below. Through a comparison with the proportion of the ethnic group born in the UK, it is clear that the Black-others are predominantly made up of people born in the UK, with a similar pattern evident for Other-others. In contrast, just over a third of Bangladeshis were born in the UK, suggesting that most of their children were born overseas.

Table 5: Median age of males and females by ethnic group in Great Britain, 1991

Ethnic group	Persons	Males	Females	Percent born in UK
White	37.4	35.8	38.9	95.8
<i>Ethnic Minorities</i>	25.5	25.3	25.6	46.8
<i>Black</i>	26.7	26.6	26.8	55.7
Black-Caribbean	30.2	30.2	30.3	53.7
Black-African	26.3	26.6	26.0	36.4
Black-Other	15.7	15.0	16.5	84.4
<i>South Asian</i>	23.9	24.0	23.9	44.1
Indian	28.0	28.2	27.9	42.0
Pakistani	19.7	19.6	19.7	50.5
Bangladeshi	17.0	17.1	16.9	36.7
<i>Chinese & others</i>	26.1	25.7	26.5	40.6
Chinese	28.7	27.9	29.6	28.4
Other Asian	30.2	29.2	30.9	21.9
Other Other	21.0	21.6	20.5	59.8
Entire population	36.5	35.0	37.9	93.1

Source: 1991 Census Local Base Statistics (ESRC purchase); Crown Copyright.

Though instructive, the median age still does not reveal the full degree of variation between ethnic groups. A very effective technique used by demographers to effectively compare populations while avoiding the need to present large amounts of figures is the **population pyramid**, which contrasts the age structure of males and females within a population group, by presenting the percentage of the male and female population in each age group, the pyramid having the youngest age groups at its base and the oldest at its apex. Here we present such diagrams for all ten ethnic groups and the three broad categories of ethnic minorities.

Figure 1 presents the population pyramids for the entire British population. The pyramid for white people is very similar, given that 94.5 per cent of the British population is white, and is thus presented in the Appendix (Figure A.1). Both are of the shape associated with a stable post "demographic transition"³ population, with age cohorts of broadly equal size up to retirement age, after which the population diminishes, more rapidly for males than females (due to the longer life expectancy of women relative to men). The two post-Second World War "baby booms" are reflected in the bulges in the pyramid for people aged 25-29 and 40-44. However, neither the white nor the British population as a whole has yet reached the next stage of "maturity", in which the population in the youngest age groups is much smaller than that in older age groups, which occurs when a population begins to decline (as in some other parts of western Europe).

Age-sex diagrams for minority ethnic groups tend to display a much more pronounced pyramidal shape, with large numbers of children and young people and relatively few old people (Figure 2). The most extreme examples of this are displayed by the "Black-Other" (Figure A.4) and "Other-Other" (Figure A.10) ethnic groups. Amongst other groups, the most youthful age structures are those of the Pakistanis (Figure A.6) and Bangladeshis (Figure A.7), though for these groups the three youngest age groups are of similar size, thus the pyramid does not widen at the base so markedly. This is indicative of a slowing in birth rates during the 1980s. This 'maturing' of ethnic minority populations is even more evident for Indians (Figure A.6), for whom all age cohorts up to 40 years are of similar size, the numbers in each 5-year age group tailing off afterwards. An interesting feature of the Bangladeshi

diagram is the excess of women over men in the 35-50 age range and of men over women in the 50-70 age range. For both Bangladeshis and Pakistanis, boys outnumber girls in the 0-15 age group.

The pyramids for Black groups (Figure 3) contrast strongly with those for South Asians (Figure 4). The overall shape is broadly pyramidal, but with a substantial bulge in the 20-35 age range, with the largest single age group being 25-29 year olds. There is another distinct bulge corresponding with 50-65 year olds. Women are in the majority in the former 'bulge', with a majority of men in the latter. The middle-aged 'bulge' probably represents first-generation immigrants, with the second generation born in Britain emerging in the younger age groups. The number of teenagers is much smaller than that of young adults and the wide base of the diagram probably represents the emerging third generation. The young adult and middle age 'bulges' are much more pronounced for "Black-Caribbeans" (Figure A.2), amongst whom the "third-generation" bulge in the diagram is much less marked. Females are in the majority in all but the oldest age groups. The pyramid for "Black-Africans" (Figure A.3) displays only two bulges; that for young adults and for children, with a broad balance between the genders. For this group, immigration is probably more recent and children probably represent the second generation. Black-others (Figure A.4) are largely British-born, and young adults form only a minor bulge in the sharply tapering pyramid.

The Chinese pyramid is highly distinctive, with more people in the cohorts aged between 20 and 45 than in older or younger age groups (Figure 5). Women are in the majority in these age groups, with a majority of males in younger age groups. The narrowing base of the pyramid suggests a decline in family size in the second generation. This pattern is even more marked for Other Asians (Figure A.9). The age and gender structure of the "Other-other" group (Figure A.10) is clearly very different from these largely East Asian groups, being much more youthful and having a preponderance of males in most age groups.

5. Population Change, 1981-91

The results presented above have made reference to the influence of variations in rates of population change upon the age structure of individual ethnic groups in 1991. This section examines the limited evidence which exists about change in the ethnic minority population of Great Britain in the period 1981-91. Since the 1991 Census was the first to collect information on ethnicity, it is necessary to turn to an alternative source, the *Labour Force Survey* (LFS) to measure the changing ethnic mix of the British population during this decade.

Substantial variations exist between the ten ethnic groups identified by the LFS in rates of population change during the 1980s (Table 6). The white population grew at only half the national average rate, while the number of people in minority ethnic groups increased by more than a quarter. The ethnic groups which displayed the fastest population growth over the decade were the Bangladeshis, whose numbers more than doubled, and the Pakistanis, which increased by more than 200 thousand, the greatest increase of any ethnic minority group. The largest single ethnic minority group are the Indians, which the LFS revealed to number nearly 800 thousand by 1989-91, having grown in numbers by 8 per cent between 1981 and 1991. Immigration is still a strong influence on the growth of the number of people of South Asian ethnic origin in Great Britain, despite the growth in the numbers of British-born. Over the period 1981-90, net in-migration to the UK from India, Bangladeshi and Sri Lanka totalled 105.5 thousand people, with net in-migration of a further 77.9 thousand people from Pakistan. Net in-migration from Africa totalled 54.3 thousand people over the same period, strongly influencing the 88 per cent growth of the "African" ethnic group between 1981 and 1991.

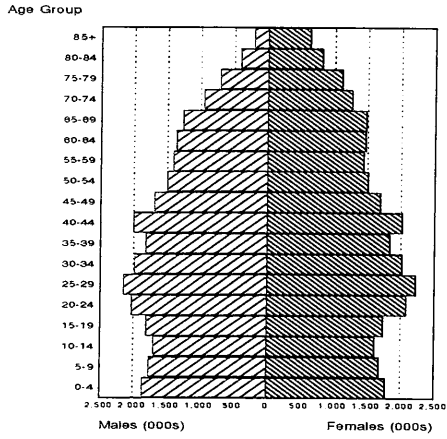


Figure 1: Entire Population

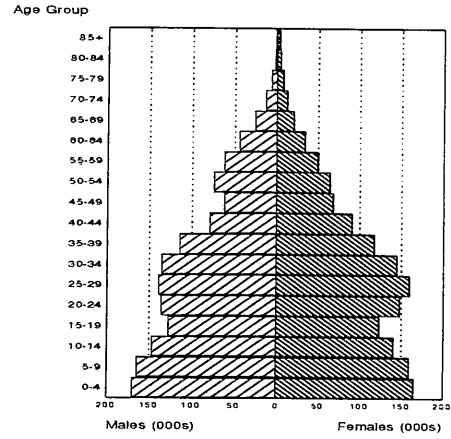


Figure 2: Ethnic Minorities

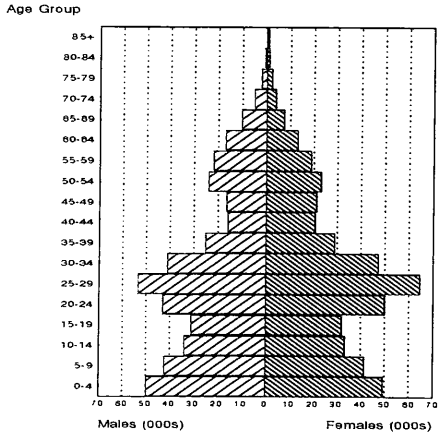


Figure 3: Black people

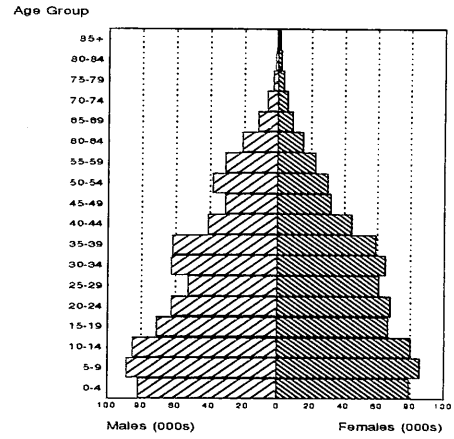


Figure 4: South Asians

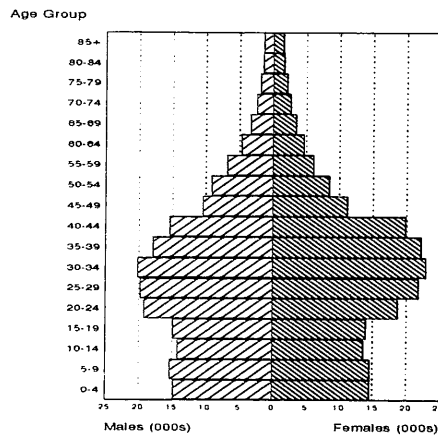


Figure 5: Chinese and others

Table 6: Estimated population of Great Britain by ethnic group, 1981 and 1989-91

Ethnic Group	Estimated Population			
	1981 (000s)	1989-91 (000s)	Change (000s)	Change (%)
White	51,000	51,808	808	1
All ethnic minorities	2,092	2,677	585	28
West Indian	528	455	-73	-14
African	80	150	70	88
Indian	727	792	65	9
Pakistani	284	485	201	71
Bangladeshi	52	127	75	144
Chinese	92	137	45	49
Arab	53	67	14	26
Mixed	217	309	92	42
Other	60	154	94	157
Not stated	608	495	-113	-19
All ethnic groups	53,700	54,979	1,279	2

Source: Population Trends 67, p1. and OPCS (1992) Table 6.294.

In contrast, West Indians and Guyanese, the second largest ethnic minority in 1981, saw their numbers fall by 14 per cent over the decade. Over the period 1981-90, net immigration from the Caribbean totalled only 3.1 thousand people. The smaller ethnic groups all experienced rapid growth rates between 1981 and 1991, while the number classified as of "Other" ethnic origin grew by nearly 100 thousand. The numbers refusing to specify their ethnic group declined by a fifth, possibly indicating a growing acceptance of the need for information on ethnic origin. Unfortunately, the ethnic classification used by the LFS is somewhat different from that used by the Census, particularly for the "Black" ethnic groups and persons of mixed ethnic origin, thus complicating comparison of the two data sources. Nevertheless, the Census and LFS figures are in broad agreement over the magnitude of the major ethnic minority group populations in 1991.

The Census of Population defined ethnic minority persons in 1981 as being those resident in a household headed by a person born in the New Commonwealth and Pakistan. On this definition, there were 2.15 million people from ethnic minorities in Britain in 1981, rising to 2.64 million in 1991 (Table 7). Though the figure for 1981 was similar to the LFS estimate, the 1991 Census found the ethnic minority population based on the ethnic group of individual respondents to be 3.015 million. The discrepancy between the two figures results from three factors. First, some heads of households born in the New Commonwealth are white. Secondly, an increasing proportion of the ethnic minority population is born in the UK (46.8 per cent in 1991) and therefore an increasing proportion of this population lives in households headed by a UK-born person. Thirdly, some persons in minority ethnic groups live in households headed by a person born neither in the UK nor the New Commonwealth.

Despite these differences in coverage, the change in the ethnic minority population as represented by this 1981 Census definition was similar to that measured by the Labour Force Survey, at 22.6 per cent or nearly half a million people. It might thus be used as a reasonable indicator of the changing structure of the ethnic minority population during the 1980s. Table 7 demonstrates the changing age structure of persons living in households headed by a person born in the New Commonwealth. While the numbers in each age group increased between

1981 and 1991, the most substantial increases occurred in the older working age groups, with the fastest rate of increase amongst those of pensionable age, the numbers of which more than doubled during the decade. However, if this ageing population is compared with the tables on age structure by ethnic group presented later in this paper, it becomes apparent that the 1981 definition of the ethnic minority population is becoming increasingly unrepresentative of those defining themselves as members of minority ethnic groups, with growth in the youngest age groups being somewhat underestimated.

Table 7: Change in persons resident in households headed by a person born in the New Commonwealth, 1981-91

Age group	Population 1981	Population 1991	Change 1981-91	Percent Change
0-4	232,005	248,733	16,728	7.2
5-15	490,420	563,458	73,038	14.9
16-29	601,490	606,417	4,927	0.8
30-44	434,683	608,066	173,383	39.9
45-Pens. age	329,119	444,451	115,332	35.0
Pensionable age	61,200	164,306	103,106	168.5
Total	2,148,917	2,635,431	486,514	22.6

Source: CRE 1981 Census Special Tabulations and 1991 Census Local Base Statistics (ESRC purchase); Crown Copyright.

6. Regional variations in age and gender structure of ethnic minorities, 1981 and 1991

In this final section, regional variations in the gender and age structure of the ethnic minority population, and regional gender and age structure changes over the decade 1981-91 are estimated using the limited information available. Here the population resident in households headed by a person born in the New Commonwealth in 1981 is compared with the population from minority ethnic groups in 1991 (Table 8).

The overall population of ethnic minorities in 1991 is slightly older and displays a more equal balance between the genders than was the case in 1981. In 1981, Wales and northern England displayed relatively high ratios of males to females, with Scotland and the West Midlands in an intermediate position and the lowest ratios occurring in southern England. This regional pattern of variation was repeated in 1991, with lower gender ratios in most regions, the South West, Merseyside and Scotland being exceptions to this trend. By 1991, a surplus of females over males had developed in the East Midlands and the South East, most notably in Greater London.

There were substantial regional variations in the median ages of persons from ethnic minorities in 1981. The median age was highest in the South East, South West and Merseyside and lowest in Yorkshire and Humberside and the West Midlands. By 1991, the range of variation in median ages between regions had increased, with the South East and South West still having the highest median ages. The lowest median ages were still found in Yorkshire and Humberside; notably West Yorkshire in which the median hardly changed over the decade. In most regions the median age increased a similar rate to the national average, but it remained fairly constant in the North West, Wales and Scotland. The regional variation in age structure reflects regional variations in ethnic composition of the population; the older Black-Caribbean and Indian ethnic groups raise the average age of the South East, while the younger Pakistani group lowers the average for Yorkshire and Humberside.

Table 8: Gender ratios and median ages of ethnic minorities by region, 1981 and 1991

Region	Ethnic Minorities (000s)	1981 Gender Ratio	Median Age	Ethnic Minorities (000s)	1991 Gender Ratio	Median Age
South East	1,226.9	1022	25.3	1,695.4	974	26.9
<i>Greater London</i>	<i>945.1</i>	<i>1014</i>	<i>25.2</i>	<i>1,346.1</i>	<i>960</i>	<i>27.0</i>
East Anglia	22.6	1047	24.7	43.4	1088	25.3
South West	40.7	1009	25.6	62.6	1021	26.6
West Midlands	326.5	1078	21.0	424.4	1016	23.1
<i>West Midlands MC</i>	<i>285.3</i>	<i>1077</i>	<i>20.6</i>	<i>373.5</i>	<i>1009</i>	<i>23.0</i>
East Midlands	136.7	1032	23.1	188.0	998	25.6
Yorkshire & Humberside	149.6	1134	20.4	214.0	1048	21.4
<i>South Yorkshire</i>	<i>24.6</i>	<i>1120</i>	<i>21.4</i>	<i>36.2</i>	<i>1097</i>	<i>22.7</i>
<i>West Yorkshire</i>	<i>67.9</i>	<i>1114</i>	<i>20.5</i>	<i>164.1</i>	<i>1037</i>	<i>20.7</i>
North West	168.7	1109	21.8	244.6	1056	22.1
<i>Greater Manchester</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>1116</i>	<i>22.0</i>	<i>148.2</i>	<i>1049</i>	<i>22.3</i>
<i>Merseyside</i>	<i>14.8</i>	<i>1128</i>	<i>25.7</i>	<i>25.9</i>	<i>1135</i>	<i>25.4</i>
North	20.1	1172	22.6	38.5	1112	23.9
<i>Tyne & Wear</i>	<i>11.4</i>	<i>1181</i>	<i>23.4</i>	<i>19.9</i>	<i>1124</i>	<i>24.3</i>
Wales	16.7	1153	24.2	41.6	1116	24.6
Scotland	40.4	1062	24.2	62.6	1094	24.7
Great Britain	2,148.9	1048	23.8	3,015.1	1001	25.5

Source: CRE 1981 Census Special Tabulations and 1991 Census Local Base Statistics (ESRC purchase); Crown Copyright.

7. Conclusions

This paper has briefly summarised the key features of the age and gender composition of the ten broad ethnic groups identified by the British Census. A number of notable results have been highlighted;

- The ethnic minority population of Great Britain continued to grow between 1981 and 1991, but there were considerable variations in rates of growth between the individual ethnic groups. The Pakistani, Bangladeshi and "Other" groups increased fastest, the number of white people grew very slowly, and the number of West Indians declined;
- Net in-migration to the UK strongly influenced the growth of the most rapidly increasing population groups of South Asian and African ethnic origin, though an increasing proportion of the population of ethnic minorities has been born in the UK;
- There are considerable variations in gender composition between ethnic groups. For Whites, Black-Caribbeans, Black-Others, Chinese and Other Asians, females are in the majority. Amongst the South Asian groups and Black-Africans, males outnumber females;
- Over the period 1981-91, the excess of males over females amongst ethnic minorities has fallen;
- The white population is considerably older on average than the populations of the various ethnic minority groups;
- The share of ethnic minorities in the population declines with age;
- There are considerable variations in age structure between ethnic minority groups. Black-Caribbeans, Chinese, Indians and Other Asians tend to be oldest while Black-Others, Other-Others, Bangladeshis and Pakistanis are youngest;
- The youngest ethnic minority group, Black-Others, has the largest percentage of its population born in the UK. Half the population of this ethnic group is of school age or less;
- 46.8 per cent of all persons from minority ethnic groups were born in the UK. Comparison with the population of households headed by a person born in the New Commonwealth shows that this 1981 Census-style definition now seriously underestimates the size of the ethnic minority population of Britain;
- Ethnic minority groups have lower dependency ratios on average than the white population;
- Dependency ratios are largely determined by the size of the child population, thus they are low for Chinese, Other Asians and Black-Caribbeans, but high for Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Black-Others;
- Black-Caribbeans are the only ethnic minority group with a sizeable number of people of pensionable age;
- The shape of population pyramids points to further rapid growth in the number of Black-Others, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis;
- The median age of ethnic minorities is higher in the South East than in the northern conurbations, probably reflecting the location patterns of relatively older and younger ethnic minorities.

The 1980s saw continued growth in the ethnic minority population of Great Britain, with the most rapidly growing ethnic groups having very youthful population structures. It is likely that these groups will continue to grow during the 1990s, and this growth may be spatially concentrated. Further analysis of the patterns identified in this introductory national analysis at the local scale will be possible using the detailed Local Base Statistics from the 1991 Census of Population.

Notes and references

- ¹ Owen, D.W. (1992) "Ethnic Minorities in Great Britain: Settlement patterns", NEMDA 1991 Census Statistical Paper no. 1, Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations, University of Warwick.
- ² The "Black-Other" group contains people recorded as "Black" with no further details and those identifying themselves as "Black British" as well as people with ethnic origins classified as mixed black/white and black/other ethnic group. The "Other-other" group contains North Africans, Arabs, Iranians, people identified as of British ethnic minority (other), specifying themselves as British with no indication of ethnic group, together with people of mixed asian/white, mixed black/white and "other" mixed categories.
- ³ This refers to the transition from a population characterised by high birth and death rates to one of low birth and death rates, generally accompanied by rapid population growth since the decline in mortality leads the decline in fertility.
- ⁴ Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (1992) Labour Force Survey 1990 and 1991, Series LFS no. 9.

Appendix

Population Pyramids for individual ethnic groups



Figure A.1: White people

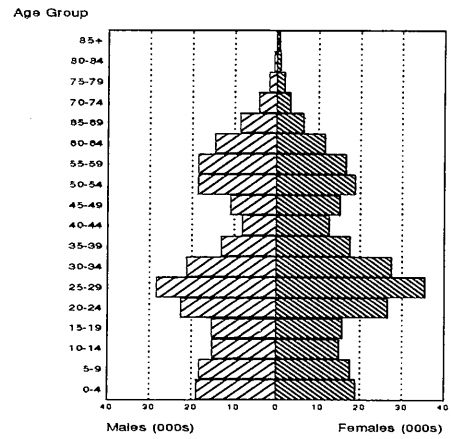


Figure A.2: Black-Caribbeans

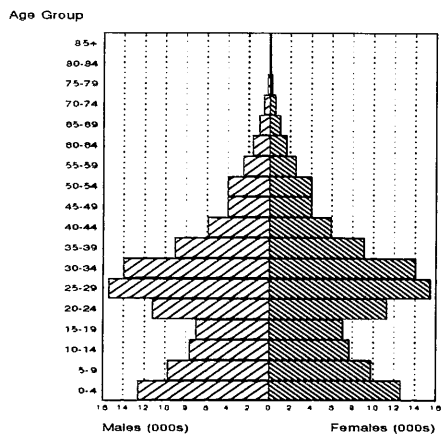


Figure A.3: Black-Africans

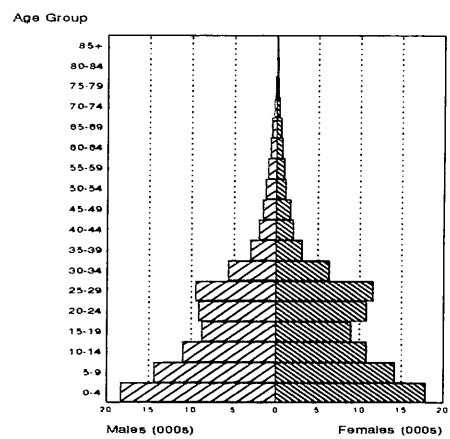


Figure A.4: Black-Others

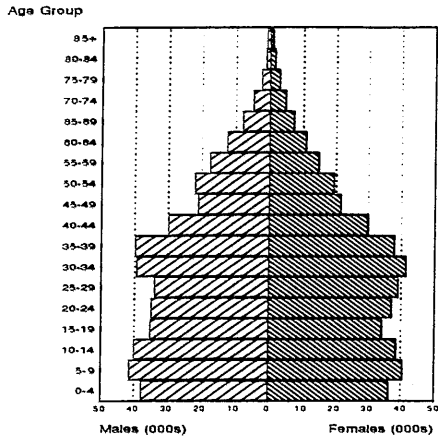


Figure A.5: Indians

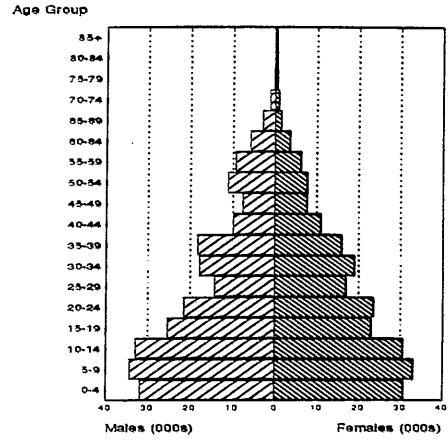


Figure A.6: Pakistanis

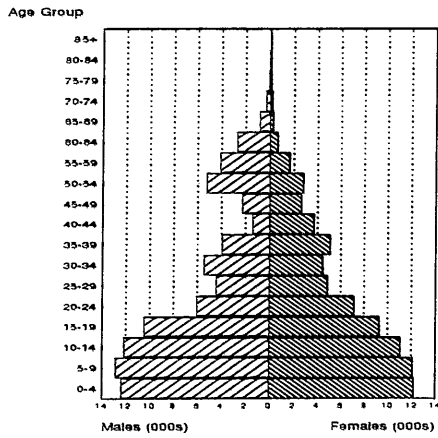


Figure A.7: Bangladeshis

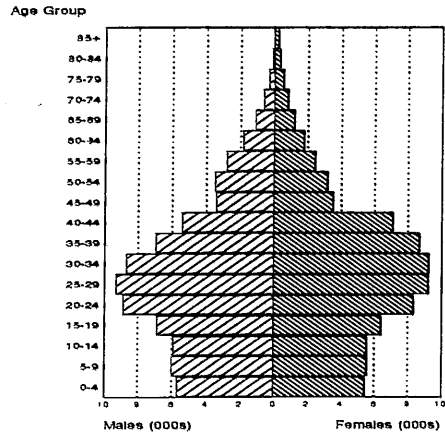


Figure A.8: Chinese

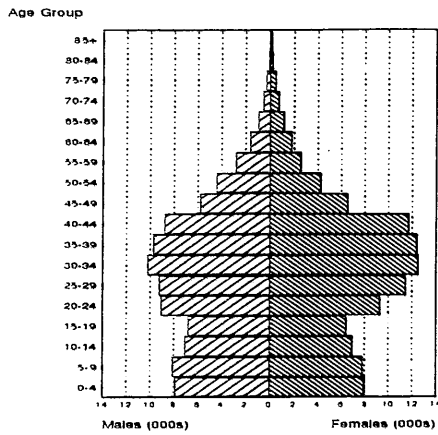


Figure A.9: Other-Asians

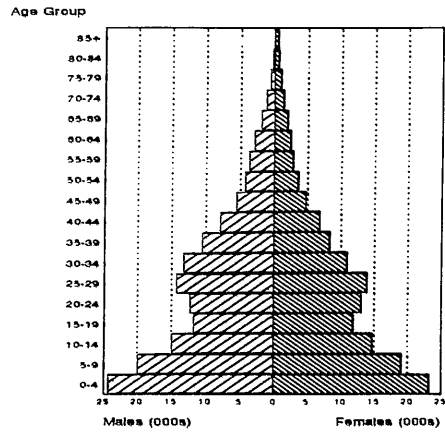


Figure A.10: Other-Others

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