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1991 Census Statistical Paper No 7

SOUTH ASIAN PEOPLE IN GREAT BRITAIN:  
*Social and economic circumstances*

David Owen

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Social and economic circumstances

1991 Census Statistical Paper no. 7

by

David Owen

National Ethnic Minority Data Archive

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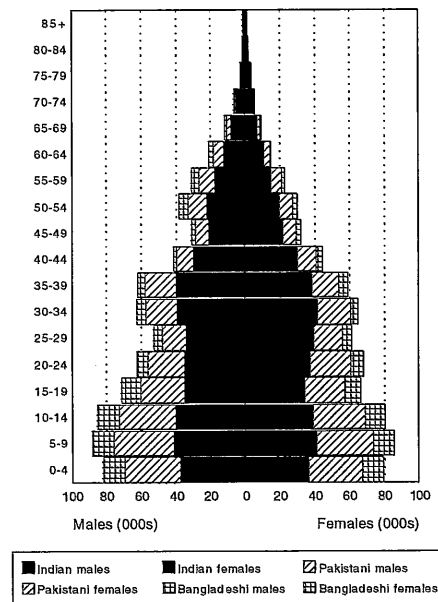
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## 1. Introduction

This Statistical Paper presents information on the social and economic circumstances of people in the Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic groups who were identified by the 1991 Census of Population as living within Great Britain, and compares their situation with that of the white ethnic group. It is one of a series (numbers 6 to 9) presenting in-depth analyses of the socio-economic differentials between ethnic groups, drawing on data sources which have recently become available; primarily the OPCS "Country of Birth and Ethnic Group" report and the Samples of Anonymised Records drawn from the 1991 Census<sup>1</sup>. These enable a number of topics which the Census Local Base Statistics do not cover to be analysed. The paper begins with an analysis of the demographic structure of the South Asian ethnic groups, which provides the context for analyses of their geographical distribution, household and family structure, housing characteristics, levels of health, participation in the labour market, patterns of employment and unemployment, and educational participation and attainment. Parallel statistical papers in this series are concerned with the "Black" (Statistical Paper 6) and "Chinese and Other" (Statistical Paper 8) ethnic groupings and people born in Ireland (Statistical Paper 9).

## 2. Demographic patterns

The age and gender structure of the three South Asian ethnic groups is summarised in the population pyramid in Figure 1. The shape of this pyramid is typical of a relatively youthful population, having a narrow apex (representing a small number of elderly people) and a base broader than most of the upper parts of the pyramid. The pyramid displays marked "bulges" in the numbers of school-age children (5-14 year olds) and in the 30-39 age range. There are fewer 0-4 year olds than 5-9 year olds, which implies that a decline occurred in the birth rate in the late 1980s. Males are in the majority in most age groups, though there are more women than men in the 20-24 and 25-29 age groups<sup>2</sup>. In contrast with white people, men are in the majority amongst people aged over 50, though this gender imbalance declines among people of pensionable age.



**Figure 1: Age and gender pyramid for South Asian ethnic groups, 1991**

However, the aggregate picture for South Asians obscures substantial differences in age and gender structure between the three ethnic groups. In particular, the Indian population is more "mature" in demographic terms than the Pakistani and Bangladeshi populations, with the

numbers of people in each age group fairly similar up to the age of 40, thereafter declining quite rapidly with increasing age. In the other two ethnic groups, the triangular shape is much more pronounced, with children and young people greatly outnumbering older people (see Statistical Paper 2). While this shape is characteristic of rapidly growing populations, the number of 0-4 year olds in each ethnic group is smaller than the number of 5-9 year olds, suggesting that the rate of population increase in each is slowing down. The Bangladeshi population is even more youthful than the Pakistani population, but differs from the other South Asian ethnic groups in having a relatively large number of men aged 50-65, since men from this ethnic group migrated to the United Kingdom much earlier than women, and family reunification occurred much later than in other South Asian ethnic groups.

Further details of the population structure of the three South Asian ethnic groups and a comparison with white people is presented in Table 1. All three are much younger on average than white people, with Indians around ten years younger (though the gender difference in median age is much smaller in each of the three South Asian ethnic groups than it is for white people). The median age of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis is even lower, being just under 20 for Pakistanis and around 17 for Bangladeshis. As a result, young people form a much larger share of the population of South Asian ethnic groups than of white people; the percentage of both pre-school age and school-age children in the Pakistani and Bangladeshi populations is more than double the corresponding percentage for white people, with Indians occupying an intermediate position. Young adults (aged 16-24) are also more common among South Asians than in the white population, but the differential is much less marked. People in the prime economically active age range (25-44) are more common in the Indian population than in either of the other two South Asian ethnic groups or in the white population, with the difference particularly marked for Bangladeshis. Being older on average, the white population has a much larger percentage of people aged over 45 and over retirement age than any of the South Asian ethnic groups, but this contrast is even more marked for women than for men. Women are in the majority amongst older people, but the share of older women in the female South Asian population is much smaller than the corresponding figure for white women. Though South Asian women are relatively young, the greater life expectancy of women is also reflected in these ethnic groups, as pensioners have a greater share of the female than the male population for all South Asian ethnic groups.

Turning to marital status, the percentage of single people amongst those aged 16 and over is similar to that for white people in all three South Asian ethnic groups. The greater youth of the Bangladeshi ethnic group largely accounts for its higher percentage of single people. There is a marked gender differential across all four ethnic groups, and this is widest for Bangladeshi people. However, the percentage married is much higher for all South Asian ethnic groups than for white people. Over two-thirds of both men and women are in this state in all three ethnic groups, with the differential between white and South Asian people greatest for women. One reason for this is because a much higher percentage of white women are widowed (reflecting their older median age), while the percentage of women who are divorced is twice as high for white women as for any of the South Asian ethnic groups. There is a marked gender differential in all four ethnic groups on these two categories, since the percentage of women widowed or divorced is considerably higher than that for men.

The percentage of the population born in the UK differs greatly between the three South Asian ethnic groups. The Indian ethnic group contains some of the earlier migrants to Britain and second and third "generations" have been in Britain, demonstrated by the fact that more than two-fifths of all Indian people had been born in the UK. There is a marked contrast in this percentage between the two younger South Asian ethnic groups. Just over half of all Pakistanis had been born in the UK in 1991, since the rapid growth of this ethnic group during the 1980s (see Statistical Papers 2 and 5) was largely due to the growing numbers of children born in Britain. However, only one-third of Bangladeshi people had been born in the UK, indicating the continuing influence of international migration upon the growth of this ethnic group. Indeed, while the percentage of the population that had been living outside the UK one year before the Census was relatively small for all three South Asian ethnic groups, this percentage is markedly

higher for Bangladeshis (particularly females) than for Indians or Pakistanis, probably reflecting wives and children who had moved from Bangladesh to join household heads already living in the UK.

**Table 1 Summary demographic characteristics of South Asian and white ethnic groups in Great Britain, 1991**

Age group, marital category, birthplace, migrants	White People		Indian people		Pakistani people		Bangladeshi people	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Population (000s)	25,066.4	26,807.4	422.9	417.4	245.6	231.0	84.9	77.9
% aged 0-4	6.7	6.0	8.9	8.7	13.0	13.3	14.6	15.6
% aged 5-15	13.8	12.2	20.9	20.5	29.6	29.5	32.2	32.2
% aged 16-24	13.0	12.1	15.0	15.4	16.9	18.0	16.8	18.5
% aged 25-44	29.8	28.2	33.8	35.4	24.6	27.1	18.0	23.1
% aged 45-59/64	22.8	16.6	17.3	13.3	13.9	9.2	16.9	9.0
% of pensionable age	13.9	24.8	4.1	6.6	2.1	2.9	1.6	1.6
Median age in years	35.8	38.9	28.2	27.9	19.6	19.7	17.1	16.9
Percent aged 16 and over								
single	29.5	22.6	27.0	21.2	29.2	21.9	32.7	21.5
married	61.0	56.1	69.6	68.3	68.7	71.3	66.2	71.4
widowed	3.9	14.5	1.6	7.6	0.9	4.7	0.4	5.9
divorced	5.5	6.8	1.9	2.9	1.3	2.1	0.7	1.2
% born in the UK	96.0	95.7	42.3	41.6	50.0	51.0	35.5	37.9
% living outside UK one year before Census	0.5	0.5	1.1	1.3	1.6	1.7	1.9	2.3

Sources: 1991 Census Local Base Statistics (ESRC purchase); Crown Copyright. OPCS/GRO(Scotland) (1994) Country of Birth and Ethnic Group report (HMSO).

### 3. Geographical distribution of South Asian ethnic groups within Great Britain

The broad regional distribution of the three South Asian ethnic groups is presented in Table 2<sup>3</sup>. There is a tendency, as with all minority ethnic groups, to follow the overall distribution of population within Britain, but the concentration into Greater London and the West Midlands characteristic of Black ethnic groups is not found to the same degree for South Asian people. Though in absolute terms, the bulk of South Asians live in the South-East, particularly Greater London, their share of the resident population is greatest in the West Midlands (former) metropolitan county, with West Yorkshire the third major concentration at this geographical scale. They have a relatively widespread geographical distribution, accounting for a larger share of the population of Wales, Scotland and the more peripheral regions of England than Black ethnic groups.

There are marked differences in the regional distribution of the three South Asian ethnic groups. Indian people tend to live in the more populous regions, the majority living in the South-East and West Midlands, but a substantial number also live in the East Midlands and North West. Indians live in all parts of Britain, but form a very small part of the population of Wales, Scotland and the remoter English regions. Pakistanis display a very different regional distribution, with a greater orientation towards northern England and the midlands than towards the South-East. Their share of the resident population is greatest in the West Yorkshire and



Table 3 presents an alternative perspective upon the geographical distribution of the three South Asian ethnic groups, focusing upon those administrative and political areas in which South Asian people are most prominent in the local population. The three types of area reported are local authority districts, parliamentary constituencies and local education authorities. For the first two entities, the ten areas in which the percentage of all residents from South Asian ethnic groups is largest are presented. Local Education Authority areas are ranked in terms of the percentage of all persons aged 5-15 from South Asian ethnic groups.

**Table 3 Largest local concentrations of South Asian ethnic groups within Great Britain, 1991**

Area	Indians		Pakistanis		Bangladeshis		
	Area	Percent	Area	Percent	Area	Percent	
Local Authority Districts (Percentage of entire population)							
Leicester		22.3	Bradford		9.9	Tower Hamlets	22.9
Brent		17.2	Pendle		9.4	Newham	3.8
Harrow		16.1	Slough		9.1	Camden	3.5
Ealing		16.1	Birmingham		6.9	Luton	2.7
Hounslow		14.3	Waltham Forest		6.3	Oldham	2.4
Newham		13.0	Luton		6.2	Westminster	2.3
Slough		12.5	Newham		5.9	Hackney	1.8
Wolverhampton		11.4	Blackburn		5.9	Islington	1.6
Redbridge		10.2	Rochdale		5.5	Haringey	1.5
Sandwell		7.9	Hyndburn		4.8	Birmingham	1.3
Parliamentary Constituencies (Percentage of entire population)							
Ealing, Southall		33.8	Birmingham, Small Heath		28.5	Bethnal Green & Stepney	32.3
Leicester East		32.6	Bradford West		26.1	Bow and Poplar	13.6
Birmingham, Ladywood		26.5	Birmingham, Sparkbrook		23.6	Birmingham, Small Heath	6.9
Leicester South		23.3	Bradford North		11.4	Holborn & St. Pancras	6.0
Brent North		22.4	Rochdale		11.4	Newham North East	5.8
Newham North East		20.5	Birmingham, Hodge Hill		10.2	Oldham Central & Royton	5.1
Brent South		19.3	Walthamstow		9.7	Luton South	4.3
Feltham and Heston		19.1	Pendle		9.4	Newham North West	4.3
Harrow East		19.0	Luton South		8.9	Birmingham, Sparkbrook	3.7
Ilford South		18.4	Newham North East		8.9	Westminster North	2.8
Local Education Authorities (Percentage of population aged 5 to 15)							
Ealing		25.1	Bradford		20.3	Tower Hamlets	46.7
Brent		24.8	Birmingham		14.3	Camden	11.1
Harrow		22.6	Waltham Forest		14.0	Newham	8.4
Hounslow		21.4	Rochdale		11.2	Westminster	8.2
Wolverhampton		19.2	Newham		10.6	Oldham	5.9
Newham		18.7	Kirklees		10.4	Islington	4.3
Redbridge		16.2	Oldham		9.4	Hackney	4.2
Sandwell		13.8	Calderdale		7.9	Haringey	3.9
Leicestershire		12.4	Manchester		7.0	Birmingham	3.0
Coventry		11.3	Walsall		5.6	Southwark	2.8

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

This table reinforces the evidence of Figures 2 to 5, in highlighting the differences in geographical distribution between these three ethnic groups. The share of Indians in the population of local authority districts is greatest in Leicester, where they form more than a fifth of the resident population, followed by a ring of Boroughs in the suburbs of London, Slough and Wolverhampton and Sandwell in the West Midlands. In contrast, the ranking for Pakistanis is dominated by northern "mill towns" (with Pakistanis as a percentage of the population highest in Bradford), together with Birmingham, Luton, Waltham Forest and Slough. The marked concentration of Bangladeshis in a few areas is strongly reflected in this table, with 22.9 per cent of the population of Tower Hamlets being from this ethnic group. Their share of the resident population tends to be highest in Inner London Boroughs, but their local concentrations in Luton, Oldham and Birmingham are also highlighted. These patterns are repeated, but in a more exaggerated form, if the share of these ethnic groups in the population of school age is considered. Indians account for a fifth or more of the school-age population in many Outer London Boroughs and Wolverhampton, though the great local concentration of Indians in Leicester is masked at the Local Education Authority level since this covers the whole of the county of Leicestershire. The share of Pakistanis in the school age population of Bradford is more than double their share of the population as a whole, and Birmingham also emerges as an area in which Pakistanis are very prominent in the school population. The local concentrations of Pakistanis in Lancashire "mill towns" is again dissipated at the LEA level, since this entity includes all of Lancashire. A similar pattern of a much higher share of the school-age population than of the population as a whole is found for Bangladeshis in many areas, the most extreme example being Tower Hamlets, where nearly half of all school age children are Bangladeshis.

The potential political influence of these ethnic groups might be gauged from their concentration in particular parliamentary constituencies. Table 3 presents the ten parliamentary constituencies in which the percentage of the resident population from each of the South Asian ethnic groups is greatest. Indians form about a third of the population in Ealing Southall and Leicester East, and around a quarter of the population in Birmingham Ladywood and Leicester South. There are also a number of north London constituencies in which they make up about a fifth of the population. In contrast, the geography of electoral influence for Pakistanis is very much oriented towards Birmingham and Bradford, in which they form over a fifth of the population of three constituencies. Elsewhere, around nine percent of the population of the Walthamstow, Pendle, Luton South and Newham North East constituencies are from the Pakistani ethnic group. The electoral influence of Bangladeshis may be strongest in the East End of London, where they form nearly a third of the population of the Bethnal Green and Stepney constituency. Outside this area, their share of constituency populations never exceeds 7 per cent, being its highest in Birmingham (Small Heath and Sparkbrook), central London, Oldham and Luton.

#### **4. Households, family structure and housing characteristics**

In the Census of Population, one person is requested to complete the form on behalf of all members of the household. A household may contain more than one family (for example, where a married couple live with one set of parents). Though families may be of more relevance in terms of social organisation, most of the information on housing characteristics and material deprivation in the Census is presented on the basis of households. Table 4 presents some key characteristics of South Asian and white households in Britain. One of the most striking differences is that households headed by persons from the three South Asian ethnic groups are more than two-thirds larger on average than white-headed households. Indian households are the smallest of the three ethnic groups, containing an average of 3.8 persons, while Bangladeshi headed households are the largest across the four ethnic groups presented (and larger than any other ethnic group; see Statistical Paper 4). This is in part because they contain a larger number of dependent children aged 0-18 on average (3.4 compared to an average of 2.5 for all South Asians and 1.8 for white-headed households), reflecting the relatively young age structure and rapid recent population growth of this ethnic group. However, this does not account for the whole of the difference in household size between white and South Asian households; the latter

also contain more adult members, including elderly relatives. This factor, together with the younger age structures of South Asian populations, accounts for the great difference in the share of pensioner households between the white and South Asian ethnic groups; in the former, over a quarter of all households are headed by pensioners, but only 2.8 per cent of South Asian households are of this type. Amongst South Asians, the percentage of pensioner-headed households is highest in the Indian ethnic group.

There are marked differences, both between white and South Asian people and between the three South Asian ethnic groups, in housing tenure. Two-thirds of white households live in owner-occupied housing, compared to over three-quarters of South Asian households. This figure rises to a maximum of 81.7 per cent for Indian households, and the percentage of Pakistani households who are owner-occupiers is only slightly smaller. In contrast, less than half of Bangladeshi households are in owner-occupied accommodation. Renting from the private sector is more common among Pakistani and Bangladeshi households than for white households, and less common for Indian households than for any of the other three ethnic groups. The percentage of households renting from Housing Associations is three times higher among Bangladeshis than for other South Asian or white households. The percentage of households renting from the public sector (local authorities, New Towns and Scottish Homes) is only half as high for South Asians as for white households, and is particularly low for Indians. However, more than a third of Bangladeshi households live in public sector accommodation, probably because of their relative poverty and concentration in relatively deprived areas such as Tower Hamlets<sup>5</sup> (in which council housing is also relatively plentiful).

Table 4 also reports a number of measures derived from the Census which have commonly been used as indicators of physical housing deprivation and material need; the percentage of households living in overcrowded conditions, lacking or sharing a bathroom or WC and not owning a car. A huge difference exists between white and South Asian households in the incidence of overcrowding (measured as the percentage of households with more than 1 person per room). The percentage of white households overcrowded is very small, but over a fifth of all South Asian households live at a density of greater than one person per room. The greater prevalence of renting may be jointly responsible with large average household size for the very high (47.1) percentage of Bangladeshi households living in overcrowded conditions. However, Pakistanis, with only slightly smaller households, display a much smaller percentage living in overcrowded accommodation. Taken together with the relatively high percentage of Bangladeshi households having to share a bathroom or WC, this suggests that Bangladeshis occupy the worst types of housing, relative to white and other South Asian ethnic groups, resulting from their low income levels and more recent arrival. Further evidence for the existence of high levels of material deprivation among Pakistani and Bangladeshi households (especially relative to Indian households) is provided by the percentage of households without a car. While a third of white households do not own a car, 36.3 per cent of Pakistani households and 60.9 per cent of Bangladeshi households have no car<sup>6</sup>. In contrast, the percentage of Indian households without a car is well below the average for white households, at 23.2 per cent. This demonstrates the contrasts in wealth between South Asian ethnic groups, but does not necessarily imply that Indian households are better off than white households; other factors such as differences in age structure also influence this figure, since older households tend to be less likely to own a car.

The table also presents the percentage of all families falling into the categories married couple, cohabiting couple and lone parents, each of which is further disaggregated according to whether or not they have dependent children, or whether their children are no longer dependent. Married couples represent a greater percentage of South Asian families than they do of white families, this figure reaching nearly 90 per cent for Indian families, a slightly higher figure than for the other two South Asian ethnic groups, for whom this percentage is intermediate between the figures for the white and Indian ethnic groups. There is a larger difference between white and South Asian married couples in the percentage without dependent children. More than a third of white married couples have no dependent children. This is nearly double the percentage for Indians, which is itself a much higher percentage than for Pakistanis, while only 8.2 per cent

of Bangladeshi married couples do not have dependent children. This differential probably results from the older average age of white people (which is also reflected in the ethnic group differential in the percentage of couples with non-dependent children), but also reflects differences between ethnic groups in the importance of child-raising as a motivation for marriage. Thus, three-quarters of married Bangladeshi couples (and slightly smaller percentages in the other two South Asian ethnic groups) have dependent children, compared to a quarter of white couples.

**Table 4 Household and family composition, housing tenure and housing amenities for South Asian and white ethnic groups in Great Britain, 1991**

Household characteristics or family type	White	All South Asian	Indian	Pakis -tani	Bangla -deshi
<b>All Households (100%)</b>	<b>21,026,565</b>	<b>357,188</b>	<b>225,582</b>	<b>100,938</b>	<b>30,668</b>
Mean household size	2.4	4.2	3.8	4.8	5.3
Mean no. of dependent children	1.8	2.5	2.1	3.0	3.4
Percent pensioner households	25.7	2.8	3.6	1.4	1.0
% households owner-occupied	66.6	77.1	81.7	76.7	44.5
% renting from private sector	7.0	7.6	6.5	9.6	9.6
% renting from Housing Associations	3.0	2.5	2.2	2.2	6.1
% renting from public sector	21.4	11.1	7.8	10.4	37.0
% with 1+ person per room	1.8	20.5	12.8	29.7	47.1
% lacking/sharing bathroom/WC	1.2	1.4	1.1	1.7	2.0
% without a car	33.0	30.1	23.2	36.3	60.9
<b>All families (10% sample)</b>	<b>1,462,155</b>	<b>34,064</b>	<b>21,364</b>	<b>9,758</b>	<b>2,942</b>
<i>Married couple families</i>	79.2	88.5	89.6	86.8	86.4
With no dependent children	35.6	17.5	20.6	13.4	8.2
With 1 or more dependent children	25.0	62.9	58.8	68.0	75.1
With non-dependent children	12.5	8.2	10.1	5.5	3.0
<i>Cohabiting couple families</i>	7.7	1.3	1.4	1.1	0.8
With no dependent children	4.9	0.7	0.9	0.6	0.4
With 1 or more dependent children	2.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.4
With non-dependent children	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0
<i>Lone parent families</i>	13.1	10.2	9.0	12.0	12.8
With 1 or more dependent children	7.8	7.0	5.4	9.4	11.3
With non-dependent children	5.4	3.2	3.6	2.6	1.5

Sources: 1991 Census Local Base Statistics (ESRC purchase); Crown Copyright. OPCS/GRO(Scotland) (1994) Country of Birth and Ethnic Group report (HMSO).

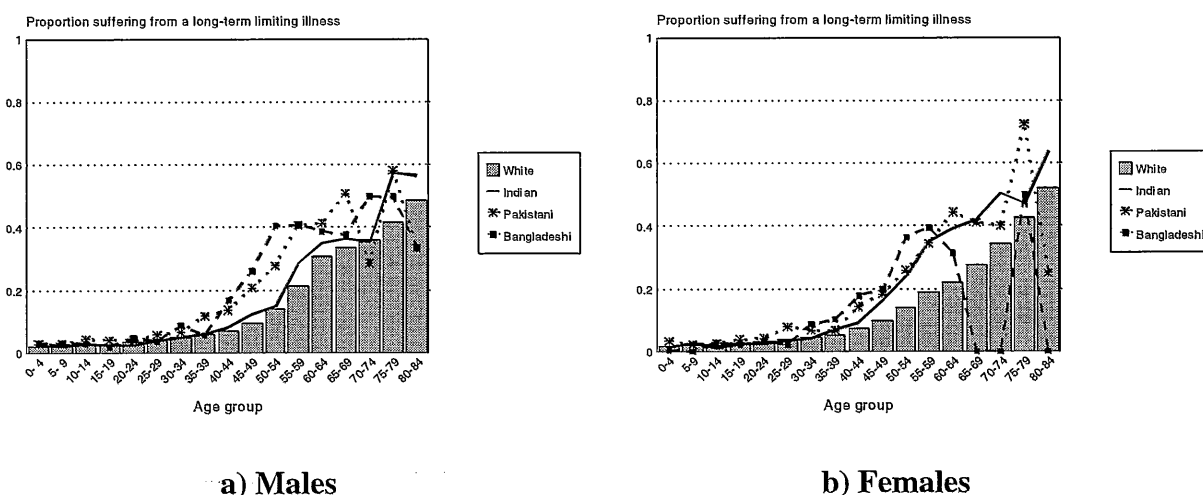
The percentage of all families who are cohabiting couples is much greater for the white ethnic group than for South Asian ethnic groups, amongst whom this percentage is highest for Indians and lowest for Bangladeshis. Across all four ethnic groups, the majority of cohabiting couples do not have dependent children, though dependent children are relatively less common for cohabiting couples in the Indian than in the white ethnic groups (and more common for Bangladeshi couples). Perhaps surprisingly, there is not a very great difference between white and South Asian people in the incidence of lone parent families. This percentage is lowest for Indian families, but similar to the white figure for both Pakistani and Bangladeshi families, at around an eighth of all families. While a large proportion of white lone parent families contain

no dependent children (possibly reflecting a higher incidence of widowhood among white women; see Table 1), nearly all Bangladeshi and the great majority of Pakistani lone-parent families have dependent children. This may reflect the youthful age structure of these ethnic groups, since the percentage of lone Indian parents with non-dependent children is relatively greater, as widowhood is more common for Indian women (Table 1).

### 5. Differentials in health between white and South Asian ethnic groups

The 1991 Census included for the first time a question intended to yield information on the incidence of long-term illness within the population. The wording of this question was "Does the person have any long-term illness, health problem or handicap which limits his/her daily activities or the work he/she can do?". The responses to the question can be regarded as quite a good indicator of the general level of health of the population, but the usefulness of the information yielded by the question is limited by the fact that all types of health problem are treated as being of equal severity.

The Census enables the proportions of males and females suffering a long-term health problem to be calculated for each ethnic group. Table 5 presents the incidence of long-term limiting illness for South Asian people, showing that the percentage suffering such illnesses is only two-thirds the corresponding figure for white people, with very little difference between the rates for Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi people. However, long-term illness affects a slightly higher percentage of all South Asian households than white households. The percentage of households containing a long-term ill person is higher for Pakistani than for Indian people, and highest of all for Bangladeshi people, at nearly a third of all households, compared with just under a quarter of white households. The mean number of long-term ill persons per household containing such a person is marginally higher in the Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic groups than in the white and Indian ethnic groups.



**Figure 6: Rates of limiting long-term illness by age group**

However, the health of individuals tends to deteriorate with age, and these differences are thus strongly influenced by the difference in age structure between white and South Asian ethnic groups. Much of the poor health of the white ethnic group is accounted for by the long-standing health problems of middle-aged people and pensioners, who form a smaller percentage of the population of South Asian ethnic groups. Thus, in order to obtain a true picture of the relative health of different ethnic groups, it is necessary to compare the crude long-term illness rate with that which would be expected from the average illness rates for the entire population, given the age structure of an ethnic group (Table 5)<sup>7</sup>. This reveals a rather different picture. The percentage of white people with limiting long-term illnesses is very close (actually marginally below) that which would be expected from the age structure of the ethnic group, but illness rates

for South Asian ethnic groups are higher than those which would be expected on the basis of their age structures. For males, this differential is greatest for the Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic groups, for each of which the chance of having a limiting long-term illness is more than 50 per cent higher than for the population as a whole, once differences in age structure are controlled for. For all three South Asian ethnic groups taken together, the "poor health" differential relative to the white ethnic group is much larger for females than for males, with the relative illness rate highest for Pakistani females. However, the levels of ill health are similar for both males and females in the Pakistani ethnic group, contrasting with both the Indian ethnic group, where female health is poorer than male health, and the Bangladeshi ethnic group, where the reverse holds true.

The influence of age upon health is illustrated in Figures 6a and 6b, which plot the proportion of males and females with limiting long-term illnesses in each 5-year age group for each of the three South Asian ethnic groups and white people. Levels of ill-health are low for all four ethnic groups in the younger age ranges, though tend to be higher for all three South Asian ethnic groups. The most rapid increases in this proportion occur from the age of 40 onwards, while in the oldest age groups, about half the population of each ethnic group is suffering from a limiting long-term illness. However, the increase in rates of long-term illness in the middle age range is far more rapid for South Asian ethnic groups than for white people. Age-specific illness rates are considerably higher for both genders in the South Asian than the white ethnic groups amongst middle age and older people, white people only catching up in the oldest age groups. Bangladeshi men tend to experience the highest illness rates in most age groups, while the ethnic group differential for South Asian women is rather narrower.

**Table 5      The incidence of limiting long-term illness among white and South Asian ethnic groups in Great Britain, 1991**

Long-term ill persons and illness rates	White people	All South Asians	Indians	Pakis -tanis	Bangla -deshis
Persons suffering limiting long-term illness (000s)	6,949.7	129.5	73.2	42.1	14.2
Percent of all persons	13.4	8.8	8.7	8.8	8.7
Households containing a long-term ill person (000s)	5,227.4	93.3	54.3	29.5	9.6
Percent of all households	24.9	26.1	24.0	29.2	31.3
Mean no. ill per household	1.3	1.4	1.3	1.4	1.5
Male age standardised long-term illness rate	12.0	7.11	7.6	6.4	6.7
Female age standardised long-term illness rate	13.1	5.92	6.7	5.0	4.5
Male relative illness rate	0.99	1.28	1.08	1.57	1.63
Female relative illness rate	0.99	1.41	1.32	1.61	1.42

Sources: 1991 Census Local Base Statistics (ESRC purchase) and 2 % individual Sample of Anonymised Records; both Crown Copyright.

## 6. Economic activity, employment and unemployment

In this section, detailed information on the experience of the three South Asian ethnic groups in the labour market is presented for Great Britain as a whole and contrasted with that for white people. It covers three broad dimensions; contrasts in participation in the labour market by age and gender, differences in the industries and occupations in which men and women from

South Asian ethnic groups work, and variations in unemployment between South Asian and white ethnic groups.

### 6.1 Labour Market participation

The main dimensions of economic participation by the three South Asian ethnic groups are presented in Table 6. The economic activity rate is an extremely important indicator, representing the percentage of people who participate in the labour market (either through being in work or by seeking work)<sup>8</sup>. The table contrasts the economic activity of all persons aged 16 and over, of economically active age and aged 16-24.

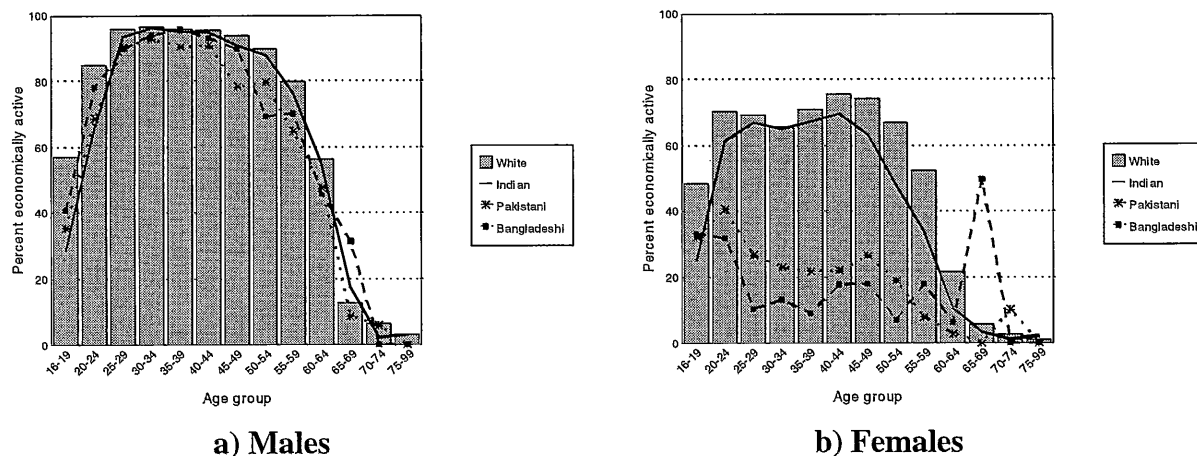
**Table 6 Economic characteristics of South Asian ethnic groups in Great Britain, 1991**

Economic status	White People		Indian People		Pakistani People		Bangladeshi People	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
<i>Aged 16+</i>								
Total (000s)	19,927.7	21,918.7	296.5	295.5	141.1	132.2	45.2	40.7
Economically active (000s)	14,577.7	10,897.4	231.5	163.7	103.4	35.9	32.8	8.9
Economic activity rate	73.2	49.7	78.1	55.4	73.3	27.1	72.4	21.8
<i>Aged 16-59/64</i>								
Total (000s)	16,442.7	15,259.2	279.4	267.7	136.0	125.6	43.9	39.5
Economically active (000s)	14,299.4	10,422.8	229.8	161.7	103.0	35.5	32.6	8.8
Economic activity rate	87.0	68.3	82.3	60.4	75.7	28.3	74.3	22.2
<i>16-24 year olds</i>								
Total (000s)	3,262.1	3,246.6	63.3	64.3	41.6	41.7	14.2	14.4
Economically active (000s)	2,544.2	2,169.9	34.2	32.4	23.6	16.7	8.8	4.7
Economic activity rate	78.0	66.8	54.0	50.4	56.8	40.0	61.8	32.4
<i>Economically inactive aged 16 and over</i>								
Total (000s)	5,345.0	11,021.3	65.1	131.8	37.7	96.4	12.5	31.8
Inactivity rate	26.9	50.3	21.9	44.6	26.7	22.9	27.6	78.2
<i>Composition of the economically inactive</i>								
full-time students (%)	13.5	6.7	46.6	19.5	48.3	12.9	44.9	14.5
permanently sick (%)	18.5	6.6	21.6	10.0	28.9	4.8	31.5	2.8
retired (%)	65.2	42.9	26.4	12.7	14.6	3.6	13.9	2.6
other inactive (%)	2.7	43.9	5.4	57.8	8.2	78.8	9.8	80.0

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

In the 16 to 59/64 year age range, white people are much more likely to be economically active than people from any of the South Asian ethnic groups. 87 per cent of white men are in the labour force, compared to 82.3 per cent of Indian men, but only around three-quarters of Pakistani and Bangladeshi men. The percentage of women who are economically active is much smaller than that of men in each ethnic group, and differentials in economic activity rates are even greater among women than among men. Over two-thirds of white women are economically active, compared to 60.4 per cent of Indian women. Economic activity rates for Pakistani and Bangladeshi women are extraordinarily low, at 28.3 per cent and 22.2 per cent respectively (confirming the results of earlier studies, which point to the relatively poor language skills of women from Asian ethnic groups and cultural differences between Muslim and other ethnic groups in the domestic roles of women in depressing the economic activity rates of Pakistani and Bangladeshi women relative to other ethnic groups<sup>9</sup>). The percentage of 16-24 year old white people participating in the labour market is smaller than that for the entire economically active population, since a substantial part of this age group is engaged in full-time education. This differential is greatest for men, and the gender differential in economic activity

rates is thus smaller than for the entire population of economically active age. This effect is also found in the Indian ethnic group, while the percentage of young Pakistani and Bangladeshi women who are economically active is actually higher than that for all women aged 16-59 from these ethnic groups. For women, the inter-ethnic group differential in economic activity rates is maintained, with Indians having the highest rates and Bangladeshis the lowest. In contrast, a higher percentage of Bangladeshi and Pakistani than Indian young men are economically active, but activity rates for both ethnic groups are well below the corresponding figure for white men.



**Figure 7: Percentage economically active by age group**

The detailed variation in labour market participation within the working age range is illustrated in Figures 7a (for men) and 7b (for women). For white men participation rates are under 60 per cent among those aged 16-19, many of whom are still at school or in further education, rising to over 80 per cent for 20-24 year olds, when most have left full-time education. Nearly all white men aged 25-29 are economically active, and these high labour market participation rates are maintained up to the 45-49 years age group. As age increases, participation rates fall through the fifties, returning to similar levels to that of labour market entrants for 60-64 year olds as men take early retirement. Labour market participation rates for South Asian men are lower than for white men for the youngest age groups, but catch up by the late twenties, and thereafter follow a similar trajectory. Indian men initially have the lowest economic activity rates of the three South Asian ethnic groups, but from the 25-29 years age group onwards, they display the highest rates, only falling behind the Bangladeshi participation rate for men aged over 65. Bangladeshi economic activity rates are comparable to those for white and Indian men across most of the age range, but begin to decline earlier in the age range than for these ethnic groups. Economic activity rates for Pakistani men follow a similar path to those of Bangladeshis, but are lower in all age groups.

For white women, the labour market participation rate is lower than that for white men across the age range. Less than half of 16-19 year olds are economically active, and only about 70 per cent of women in their twenties participate in the labour market. Economic activity rates fall for women in their late twenties and early thirties, as they withdraw from the labour market in order to raise families (though the time women spend out of the labour market associated with childcare has been declining throughout this century). They return in their later thirties and participation rates rise to a peak for women aged 40-49, thereafter falling for women in their fifties. The decline in economic activity with advancing age is slower for women than men, and over a fifth of women aged 60-64 were still economically active in 1991. Economic activity rates for Indian women follow a similar pattern, but are lower than for white women at all ages, starting much lower and starting their decline at an earlier age. Economic activity rates for Pakistani women reach a peak of around 40 per cent for 20-24 year olds, thereafter declining with increasing age. The trend for Bangladeshi women is very similar. This ethnic group displays the lowest female economic activity rate of any for all but the 16-19 age group (and



some of the oldest age groups in which these rates are strongly influenced by small sample sizes).

Table 6 also provides some insight into the reasons underlying differences in labour market participation between white and South Asian ethnic groups, through breaking down the structure of the economically inactive into a number of categories. Amongst men, about a quarter in each ethnic group are economically inactive, the inactivity rate being highest for Bangladeshis and lowest for white men. For white men, the main causes of inactivity are retirement and permanent sickness (associated with industrial diseases and high unemployment). In contrast, nearly half of economically inactive Indian men are in full-time education, with the remainder almost equally split between the states of 'permanent sickness' and retirement. The percentage of full-time students is even higher among economically inactive Pakistani men, but the percentage permanently sick is much higher than for Indian men, while the percentage retired is just over half the corresponding figure for Indian men. This pattern is repeated for Bangladeshi men, amongst whom the percentage permanently sick is even higher. This is consistent with the earlier finding relating to the poor health of these ethnic groups. Interestingly, the 'other inactive' category is much larger for Pakistani and Bangladeshi men than for white and Indian men, indicating that a higher percentage of men from these two ethnic groups have ceased to seek formal employment.

Economic inactivity rates (the percentage of those aged 16 and over neither employed nor seeking work) are higher for women than for men across all four ethnic groups. The differential is greatest for Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, with more than three-quarters of all women in the latter ethnic group outside the labour market. Economically inactive white women are nearly all either retired or "other inactive" - in other words looking after a home or family full-time (though this category includes a number of other possible states), with the percentage who are full-time students half that for white men or South Asian women. "Other inactive" is also the largest single category for all three South Asian ethnic groups, accounting for four-fifths of economically inactive Pakistani and Bangladeshi women, showing how staying at home to look after a family strongly limits the participation of South Asian women in the formal labour market, a course of actual which is further necessitated by the larger family sizes and larger numbers of younger dependent children in the Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic groups<sup>10</sup>. However, nearly a fifth of inactive Indian women are full-time students, a percentage three times higher than that for white women, and half as high again as for other South Asian women. The percentages retired and permanently sick are very low for Pakistani and Bangladeshi women, but higher for Indian women, which suggests that the high permanent sickness rates for Pakistani and Bangladeshi men may be as much a result of withdrawal from the labour market through the "discouraged worker effect" (as the long-term unemployed often move from unemployment benefit to sickness benefit) as an indicator of poor health, since the health of women is almost equally poor.

## 6.2 Employment

Table 7 outlines the broad dimensions of employment for men and women from South Asian ethnic groups, and compares these with those of white people. Most people are employees, but self-employment is relatively more important for South Asian people than for white people. Pakistanis and Indians are more likely to be self-employed than Bangladeshi people. The percentage of all people in work self-employed is much higher for men than for women across all four ethnic groups, with the differential greatest for white people. Amongst employees, there are substantial differences between men and women and between ethnic groups in the percentage who are employed part-time. This form of employment has grown rapidly in the last twenty years, at the expense of full-time jobs, and the great majority of this growth has taken the form of jobs for women. Nearly 40 per cent of white women employees worked part-time in 1991, but only about a quarter of employed women in South Asian ethnic groups worked part-time, this type of work being least common among Indian women. The percentage of male employees working part-time is far lower than for women, at 4.2 per cent of white and Indian men, 6.7 per cent of Bangladeshi men and 7.1 per cent of Pakistani men in employment. These

differences are also reflected in contrasts in the median working week for ethnic groups and genders. On average, white men work for 5 hours longer per week than white women. There is very little difference between white and South Asian men in the length of the average working week, but Indian and Pakistani women each work for over two hours a week longer than white women on average.

**Table 7      Employment of South Asian ethnic groups and white people in Great Britain, 1991**

Economic status	White People		Indian People		Pakistani People		Bangladeshi People	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
All in work (000s)	12,822.4	10,087.9	196.6	139.6	71.3	23.5	22.1	5.1
Full-time employees (000s)	10,121.9	5,677.0	140.8	93.2	48.6	14.5	16.3	3.4
Part-time employees (000s)	444.9	3,743.6	6.2	28.7	3.7	5.4	1.2	1.3
%employed part-time	4.2	39.7	4.2	23.5	7.1	27.0	6.7	27.0
Median hours worked	38.2	33.8	38.4	36.5	38.5	36.4	38.2	35.8
Self-employed with employees (000s)	737.2	241.5	22.2	6.9	7.4	1.3	3.5	0.2
Self-employed without employees (000s)	1,518.4	425.9	27.4	10.8	11.6	2.3	1.2	0.2
%working self-employed	17.6	6.6	25.3	12.7	26.6	15.6	20.9	8.8
Self-employed with employees as percent of economically active	5.1	2.2	9.6	4.2	7.1	3.7	10.6	2.5
Econ. active students (000s)	97.1	125.2	1.4	1.5	0.7	0.4	0.2	0.1

Source: 1991 Census Local Base Statistics (ESRC purchase) and OPCS/GRO(Scotland) (1994) Country of Birth and Ethnic Group report (HMSO); both Crown Copyright.

Self-employment grew by nearly a million during the 1980s, having received considerable support from government policies aimed at encouraging people to be more "entrepreneurial" and start up their own businesses (e.g. the Enterprise Allowance Scheme). However, some of this growth resulted from changes in employment contracts enforced by employers, rather than being a result of people starting their own businesses. By 1991, the growth of self-employment was beginning to slow down as a result of the return of economic recession. Census data provides some insight into the extent to which self-employment reflects small business formation, since it distinguishes whether the self-employed had employees or not. An "entrepreneurship rate" can be calculated, representing the percentage of economically active people in an ethnic group who were self-employed with employees (Table 7). There are strong white/South Asian and male/female differentials. Bangladeshi men are most likely to be in business on their own account, closely followed by Indian men; white men are less likely than men from any of the South Asian ethnic groups to be entrepreneurs. The entrepreneurship rate is higher for men than for women in each ethnic group presented in the table, with the differential widest among Bangladeshis. Amongst women, Indians are more likely to be entrepreneurs, while white women are less likely to have their own business than women from any of the South Asian ethnic groups.

There are major contrasts between white and South Asian ethnic groups and between men and women in the type of work which they are engaged in. Two important dimensions of work are the industry (detailed in Table 8) and occupation (presented in Table 9) in which a person works<sup>11</sup>. Most white men work in four industrial sectors; engineering, construction, distribution (which includes hotels, catering and retailing) and business services. This contrasts strongly with white women, the great majority of whom work in the service sector, mainly in distribution and the health and education services. The industrial distribution of employment for

South Asian men is a rather different to that of white men, with more employed in textiles and clothing and distribution and fewer employed in construction and the public sector, though there are such marked differences between the three ethnic groups that generalisation is difficult. Indian men are predominantly employed in four types of industry; engineering, distribution, transport and communications and business services. The first three industries are also important sources of employment for Pakistani men, but the percentage employed in the textile and clothing industry is double that for Indian men, while Pakistani men are far less likely than white or Indian men to work in business services or the public sector. The industrial distribution of Bangladeshi men contrasts strongly with the other three ethnic groups considered; more than two-thirds work in the distribution sector (covering retailing, restaurants and other catering outlets), with the largest other sources of employment being textiles and clothing and the health and education services.

**Table 8      The industrial structure of work for South Asian ethnic groups and white people in Great Britain, 1991**

Industrial category	White People		Indian people		Pakistani people		Bangladeshi people	
	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
Agriculture, etc.	2.9	1.0	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mining	1.1	0.2	0.3	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.0
Utilities	1.8	0.7	0.5	0.6	0.3	0.5	0.2	0.0
Metals&minerals	2.1	0.7	1.8	0.4	2.8	0.5	0.7	0.0
Chemicals	1.7	0.9	1.1	1.6	1.5	0.5	0.0	0.0
Engineering	13.2	4.4	14.3	7.5	11.5	5.0	4.0	2.8
Food,drink,tobacco	2.4	2.1	2.7	3.6	3.2	2.0	0.5	1.4
Textiles&clothing	1.3	2.7	5.6	12.3	10.0	14.1	8.8	19.4
Other manufacturing	5.7	3.1	4.1	3.3	4.6	2.0	1.4	2.8
Construction	12.5	1.6	4.7	0.7	1.9	0.2	0.5	0.0
Distribution	16.7	24.1	29.6	25.9	30.1	28.7	67.0	26.4
Transport/comms.	8.7	3.3	10.8	4.2	15.9	5.7	2.6	2.8
Business services	11.2	13.6	10.9	12.4	6.2	9.7	4.2	6.9
Misc. services	5.7	14.1	2.7	6.9	3.9	10.6	1.6	8.3
Health&education	5.7	20.8	7.2	13.9	4.0	13.6	5.1	20.8
Public administration	7.3	6.9	3.5	6.3	4.0	6.7	3.3	8.3

Source: 1991 Census 2 % Individual Sample of Anonymised Records; Crown and CMU Copyright.

The industrial distribution of employment for South Asian women has some similarities with that for white women, since distribution is the largest source of employment in all four ethnic groups, and the other service sector industries are important for each, but there are also significant differences between the three South Asian ethnic groups. Indian women are predominantly employed in four industrial sectors; distribution, health and education, business services and textiles and clothing. Other manufacturing industries such as engineering are also more important sources of work for Indian than for white women. In contrast, Indian women are less likely to work in miscellaneous services and public administration. The industrial distribution of Pakistani women reveals even greater concentration into distribution, textiles and clothing, health and education and miscellaneous services. Business services and engineering are less important sources of employment than for Indian women. Bangladeshi women tend to work in three types of industry; distribution, textiles and clothing and health and education.

Public administration is also a more important source of employment for this ethnic group than for white and other South Asian women.

The occupational structure of work is strongly influenced by its industrial structure; thus there are more manual jobs in the manufacturing sector and more white-collar jobs in the service sector. However, there is a long term trend towards a decline in manual work and a growth in non-manual employment across all sectors of advanced industrial economies, while it should also be recognised that manufacturing firms carry out many 'service-like' functions, such as marketing and administration. Comparing the occupational structure of white men and white women highlights the strong gender division of work which exists in Britain (Table 9). The most common occupations for white men are corporate managers, other skilled trades, skilled engineering trades and industrial machine and plant operators (semi-skilled manual jobs), with "other elementary occupations" (unskilled manual work) and "managers and proprietors in agriculture and services" (self-employed farmers and business people) also important sources of work. In contrast, by far the dominant types of work done by white women are clerical occupations, followed by personal service occupations (hairdressers, etc.), secretarial occupations, other elementary occupations (unskilled manual jobs) and sales occupations. The percentage of corporate managers is just over half that for white men, and white women are also less likely to be scientists and engineers or work in skilled manual craft occupations. However, white women are more likely than white men to be teachers or nurses (health associate professionals).

On the whole, South Asian people tend to work in lesser skilled jobs than white people. For Indian men, the most common occupations are managers and proprietors in the agriculture and service sectors (in order words shopkeepers and restaurant owners), industrial plant and machine operators, clerical occupations and "other skilled trades", and they are less likely than white men to work in senior management jobs. Small business men and skilled manual workers are clearly prominent, but the percentage of science and engineering professionals and health professionals (doctors, etc.) are both higher than for white people, showing that there is a also a substantial number of highly qualified and highly skilled Indian men in the workforce. The occupational distribution of Indian women has some similarities with that of white women, especially since clerical occupations are the most common type of work for both, and a high percentage work in secretarial occupations. However, their occupational distribution also has similarities with Indian men in the relatively high percentage working as machine operators and in other skilled trades. Again, Indian women are more likely than white women to be managers and proprietors or health professionals.

The occupational distribution of Pakistani men is quite similar to that of Indian men. The largest occupations are industrial plant and machine operators, managers and proprietors in agriculture and services, and drivers and mobile machinery operators. However, skilled manual and white collar occupations are much less common than for Indian men, since a much smaller percentage work in professional occupations, clerical and secretarial jobs. Though the percentage of health professionals is still much higher than for white men, less skilled occupations are more prominent for Pakistani than for Indian men. The occupational distribution of Pakistani women is also similar to Indian women, with clerical occupations, other sales occupations, other skilled trades, managers and proprietors in agriculture and services and industrial plant and machine operators the most common occupations. Sales and personal service and teaching jobs are more significant for Pakistani than Indian women.

The occupational structure of Bangladeshi men is strongly influenced by their very concentrated industrial distribution. Nearly half work in personal service occupations, while the next largest occupational category is managers and proprietors in agriculture and services. This reflects their dependence upon the distribution sector as small shopkeepers and workers and proprietors in the restaurant trade. They are more weakly represented than other South Asian men in management, other white collar jobs and industrial occupations, but are again much more likely than white men to be health professionals. Bangladeshi women predominantly work in 'other skilled trades'; clerical occupations, personal service occupations, sales occupations and

teaching occupations, reflecting the wider range of industrial sectors in which they work. A higher percentage of Bangladeshi than white or other South Asian women work in unskilled jobs.

**Table 9      The occupational structure of work for South Asian ethnic groups and white people in Great Britain, 1991.**

Standard Occupational Classification sub-major group	White People		Indian people		Pakistani people		Bangladeshi people	
	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
Corporate managers and administrators	12.4	6.6	8.2	4.4	4.9	3.4	3.0	4.1
Managers and proprietors agriculture&services	7.1	5.2	14.8	8.3	16.0	11.2	13.6	4.1
Science and engineering professionals	3.8	0.5	4.2	0.8	2.0	0.5	0.5	1.4
Health professionals	0.7	0.5	5.4	2.5	2.1	1.7	3.5	0.0
Teaching professionals	2.5	5.2	0.9	2.6	1.1	3.2	0.9	8.2
Other professionals	2.6	1.6	3.0	1.9	2.6	1.5	1.9	2.7
Science and engineering associate professionals	3.4	1.1	2.7	1.4	1.4	1.7	0.7	0.0
Health assoc. professionals	0.5	5.0	0.8	3.3	0.3	2.4	0.0	2.7
Other associate professionals	4.1	3.6	2.2	2.0	1.8	4.2	0.9	4.1
Clerical occupations	6.4	18.3	9.3	18.5	6.3	13.7	3.5	15.1
Secretarial occupations	0.2	10.3	0.3	7.6	0.5	6.1	0.2	5.5
Skilled construction trades	4.7	0.1	1.1	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
Skilled engineering trades	7.9	0.3	6.3	0.3	4.0	0.0	0.2	0.0
Other skilled trades	11.0	3.1	9.3	11.1	8.1	12.5	8.2	19.2
Protective service occs.	3.3	0.6	0.7	0.1	0.8	0.0	0.2	0.0
Personal service occs.	2.4	12.4	1.5	4.6	3.1	9.5	48.7	9.6
Buyers, brokers, sales reps	2.5	1.0	2.4	1.0	1.7	0.7	0.5	1.4
Other sales occupations	1.8	9.2	3.8	7.4	5.2	12.5	1.6	9.6
Industrial plant and machine operators, assemblers	7.7	4.6	11.7	14.9	17.1	11.0	4.9	5.5
Drivers and mobile machinery operators	6.7	0.4	4.9	0.1	13.3	0.2	0.9	0.0
Other occupations in agriculture, forestry and fishing	1.0	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0
Other elementary occupations	7.1	9.9	6.4	7.1	7.1	3.7	5.9	6.8

Source: 1991 Census 2 % Individual Sample of Anonymised Records; Crown Copyright.

### 6.3 Unemployment

Table 10 contrasts the experience of unemployment between white people and the three South Asian ethnic groups, for men and women. Once again, there are both ethnic group and gender dimensions to the pattern of variation presented. Unemployment rates for South Asian people are substantially higher than those for white people. Amongst men, there are major differences between the ethnic groups. The unemployment rate for Indian men is well below that for the other South Asian ethnic groups, and is only 25 per cent higher than for white men. However, unemployment rates for Pakistani and Bangladeshi men are twice as high, lying at around 30 per cent. Female unemployment rates are much higher for the South Asian than the

white ethnic group, with Indian women experiencing an unemployment rate twice as high as that for white women. The ethnic group differential for women mirrors that of men, but is even more extreme. The female unemployment rate is below the corresponding male rate for white and Indian women, but even higher for Pakistani and Bangladeshi women (substantially higher in the latter case). White men are more likely, and South Asian men much less likely, than women to participate on government training schemes. South Asian men are more likely to be on such schemes than white men, with the percentage of the economically active on such schemes highest for Pakistani men. The percentage of economically active Pakistani, and especially Bangladeshi, women on such schemes is much higher than that for Indian women, and thus the already high unemployment rates for these ethnic groups probably understates the true unemployment rate. The high participation of women from these ethnic groups on these schemes might be because they need to undertake language training courses in order to find work.

Unemployment rates vary with age, being high for young people, then falling to a minimum for people in the middle of the age range, before rising again for older workers. For white people, unemployment rates are higher for men than for women in all parts of the age range, with the differential greatest for the youngest and oldest people. Among 16-24 year olds, unemployment rates exceed 25 per cent for all South Asian ethnic groups and both genders. Two-fifths of young Pakistani men and over a third of young Pakistani and Bangladeshi women are unemployed, while the lowest unemployment rates are experienced by Indians and Bangladeshi men. For Indians, unemployment rates decline with age until the 40-49 age range, thereafter rising. The gender differential is quite narrow in each age group. For Pakistanis, unemployment rates are lower in the entire 25-49 age range than for older and younger people, with male unemployment rates slightly higher than female rates. In contrast, unemployment rates for Bangladeshis remain high across the age range, exceeding 50 per cent for workers aged 50 and over. In each age group, the female unemployment rate is much higher than the male unemployment rate.

It is also possible to analyse the incidence of unemployment by industry and occupation. Unfortunately, the industrial specialisation of individual ethnic groups means that meaningful unemployment rates often cannot be calculated; thus the small numbers of South Asians working in agriculture, the energy sector and the construction industry result in extreme unemployment rates. For white people, male unemployment rates are highest for construction workers and unemployment rates for both men and women are higher for the manufacturing sector than the service sector. In the manufacturing sector, unemployment rates are much higher for South Asian than white people, and higher for Pakistani than Indian people, with male unemployment rates greater than those for females in each case. Nearly half of Bangladeshi men working or last employed in manufacturing industry were unemployed in 1991. Unemployment rates are much lower for service sector workers, being only slightly above the white unemployment rate for Indian people, but unemployment rates for Pakistani and Bangladeshi people are more than 50 per cent higher than for Indian people. Unemployment rates are higher for men than for women across industrial sectors, with the gender differential greater for South Asians in manufacturing and white people in services.

For white men, unemployment rates tend to rise as the level of skill in an occupation falls; managers and professional people experience the lowest unemployment rates while unskilled workers suffer the highest rates of unemployment. For Indian men, unemployment rates are lowest at each end of the occupational hierarchy and highest for skilled manual workers. Unemployment rates for Pakistani and Bangladeshi men rise as skill levels decline, but half of all skilled Bangladeshi men are unemployed. Unemployment rates are much higher for Pakistani and Bangladeshi than for white men in all occupations. For women, unemployment rates are highest for skilled manual occupations in white, Indian and Pakistani ethnic groups, but highest in unskilled occupations for Bangladeshis. Unemployment rates in all occupational groups are far higher for Pakistani and Bangladeshi women than for white and Indian women, with the differential particularly wide for other white collar and unskilled occupations.

**Table 10 Unemployment among South Asian and white ethnic groups in Great Britain, 1991**

Economic activity, age, industry and occupation groups	White People		Indian people		Pakistani people		Bangladeshi people	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Economically active (000s)	14577.7	10897.4	231.4	163.6	103.4	35.9	32.8	8.9
Unemployed (000s)	1556.5	689.7	31.0	20.7	29.5	10.6	10.1	3.1
Unemployment rate	10.7	6.3	13.4	12.7	28.5	29.6	30.9	34.5
On govt. scheme (000s)	198.8	119.8	3.9	3.3	2.7	1.8	0.6	0.7
% on schemes	1.4	1.1	1.7	2.0	2.6	4.9	1.8	7.9
<i>Unemployment rates by age:</i>								
16-24	18.0	12.3	25.3	21.0	40.8	35.2	25.1	36.7
25-39	10.2	6.1	13.0	11.0	23.7	26.0	24.1	31.0
40-49	7.5	4.1	8.4	9.1	27.0	25.3	26.0	45.5
50-59/64	10.7	5.5	15.2	15.4	34.8	31.0	55.2	66.7
<i>Unemployment rates by previous industry of employment:</i>								
Agriculture/energy	7.8	3.7	8.1	0.0	16.7	25.0	0.0	-
Manufacturing	9.1	7.8	12.7	11.3	27.4	19.2	47.2	5.0
Construction	15.8	6.7	17.6	9.5	24.2	0.0	0.0	-
Services	8.2	5.0	8.8	7.9	14.3	13.9	15.1	14.5
<i>Unemployment rates by previous occupation of employment:</i>								
Managerial/professional	4.5	3.5	6.6	4.2	9.4	9.0	9.3	9.1
Other white collar	8.6	4.9	11.1	10.0	18.4	15.2	18.2	20.0
Skilled manual	9.6	10.1	13.8	15.3	24.5	27.1	50.0	0.0
Semi-skilled	11.1	7.6	14.6	10.8	24.3	15.5	20.2	14.3
Unskilled	19.1	5.6	8.9	5.1	30.9	23.8	35.9	28.6

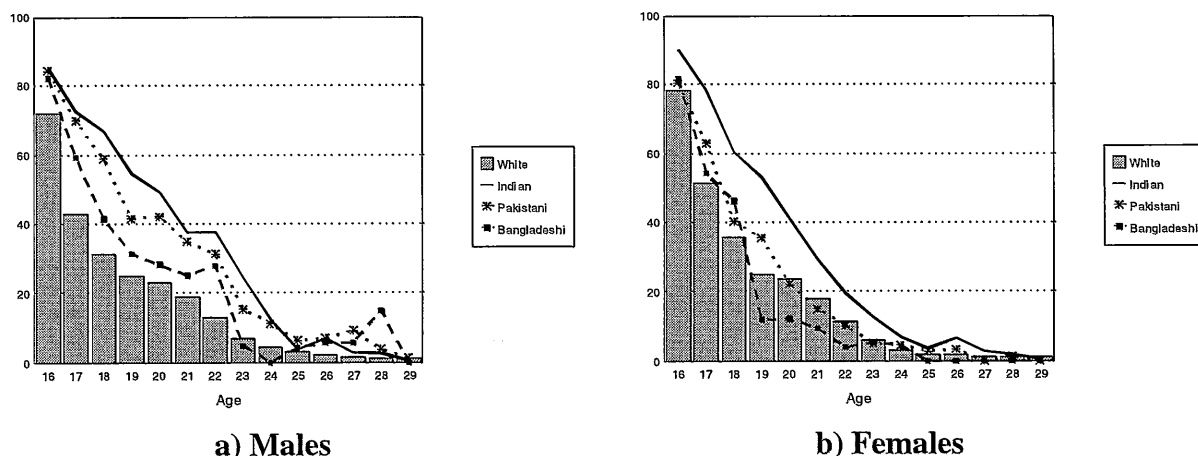
Source: 1991 Census Local Base Statistics (ESRC purchase) and 2 % Individual Sample of Anonymised Records; both Crown Copyright.

## 7. Participation in higher and further education and highest qualifications held

The recent expansion of the higher education system and increasing awareness of the need to raise general levels of education and training in order to improve national economic competitiveness has led to young people being encouraged to stay in full-time education for a longer period, in order to gain additional qualifications. However, Asian young people (Indians in particular) already displayed higher staying-on rates than white and Black young people long before this trend began<sup>12</sup>. The participation of young people from the three South Asian ethnic groups in further and higher education is illustrated in Figure 8 (a and b). This diagram shows the percentage of young people who were full-time students at the time of the Census, for each single year of age from 16 to 29.

The general trend for white males and females is for the percentage involved in full-time education to decline with age, with a rapid fall associated with school leaving and then a more gradual decline up to the age of 25. The decline levels out after this point, with students representing a small but steady percentage of white 25-29 year olds. The percentage of Indian young men in full-time education is well over 80 per cent for 16 year olds, comparable with other South Asians but much higher than that for white young men. It then declines more slowly than for the other three ethnic groups up to the age of twenty, at which nearly half are still in full-

time education. The percentage of full-time students then declines at a faster rate up to the age of 25, thereafter remaining at a small figure, similar to Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. The percentage of Pakistani men in full-time education follows a similar trend over time to that of Indian men, but is below than the corresponding figure for Indians throughout the age range (though higher than that for white men). The percentage of Bangladeshi young men in full-time education is smaller than those for Indian and Pakistani men at each age from 16 to 29, and the decline in educational participation in the later teenage years is more pronounced, but by the later twenties a similar percentage to the other South Asian ethnic groups is still in full-time education.



**Figure 8: Percentage in full-time education by single year of age**

Full-time students represent a higher percentage of white women aged 16-18 than they do of men of the same age, with over three-quarters of 16 year olds remaining in education. The percentage of white women in education declines more slowly than the corresponding percentage for men, and remains higher until the age of 20, after which it falls below the male percentage. Nearly 90 per cent of 16 year old Indian women remain in full-time education, and this percentage declines more slowly than that for white women. A higher percentage of Indian women than white or other South Asian women are in full-time education for each year of age from 16 to 29. The percentage of Pakistani women in full-time education is similar to that for white women throughout the age range. The percentage of Bangladeshi women remaining in full-time education is smaller than for the other three ethnic groups, and declines more rapidly for women in their later teenage years and early twenties than for the other three ethnic groups. Across all three South Asian ethnic groups, the percentage of women in full-time education falls below the corresponding figure for men beyond the age of 20.

Table 11 presents contrasts between the three South Asian ethnic groups and white people in their achievement of further and higher education qualifications. More than an eighth of white people aged 18 and above hold the equivalent of an A-level or better, a slightly larger share of the population than for South Asians as a whole. However, there are marked differences between the three South Asian ethnic groups in their degree of attainment of such qualifications. While the percentage of Indian people (15 per cent) with such qualifications is higher than that of white people, only 7 per cent of Pakistanis and 5.2 per cent of Bangladeshis aged 18 and over have this level of qualification. The low percentage for Bangladeshis may reflect the relatively late entry (and consequent difficult adjustment) to the British education system of many children migrating to join their fathers.

This partly reflects differences in age structure between ethnic groups. The great majority of those with A-levels (or their equivalent) and above as their highest qualification are aged over 30; the percentage with such qualifications among the 18-29 year olds is lowest for white people and highest for Pakistanis. This ethnic group has a young age structure and the



percentage qualified will increase as it ages and the percentage of the population which has benefited from higher education increases. However, there is an interesting contrast with Bangladeshis, who have an even younger age structure and a lower percentage of all over 18 with qualifications, but a larger percentage of the qualified aged over 30, and more than a third aged 45 and over (partly reflecting their attainment of higher education qualifications later in life than other ethnic groups).

**Table 11 Highest qualification held, and the characteristics of highly qualified South Asian and white people in Great Britain, 1991.**

Qualifications, age groups and economic status	White people	South Asians	Indians	Pakistanis	Bangla-deshis
Persons aged 18 and over(000s)	40,559.6	884.5	558.2	251.4	74.9
Persons with A-Level equivalent or better as highest qualification (000s)	5,416.6	105.4	83.9	17.7	3.9
persons with higher degree (000s)	365.0	11.4	8.8	2.1	0.5
persons with first degree (000s)	2,489.3	64.5	50.9	10.8	2.9
persons with A-Level/Higher/Diploma (000s)	2,562.3	29.5	24.1	4.8	0.5
Age distribution of persons holding the equivalent of A-levels and better (% of all qualified):					
aged 18-29	21.4	32.5	31.4	39.1	25.5
aged 30-44	40.0	43.1	44.1	39.6	37.5
aged 45 up to pensionable age	26.2	22.6	22.5	20.1	36.0
of pensionable age	12.4	1.9	2.0	1.2	1.0
All aged 18 and over	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Percentage of all people in the age group with higher level qualifications:					
aged 18-29	12.5	11.5	15.2	7.2	3.4
aged 30-44	19.7	13.6	17.0	7.6	6.0
aged 45 up to pensionable age	14.0	11.6	14.7	6.4	6.5
Of pensionable age	6.6	3.3	3.8	1.8	1.6
All aged 18 and over	13.4	11.9	15.0	7.0	5.2
Qualified persons aged 18-59/64 (000s)	4,745.5	103.5	82.2	17.4	3.8
Total economically active (000s)	4,208.3	91.1	73.5	14.3	3.2
Percent economically active	88.7	88.0	89.4	82.2	83.8
Employed or self-employed (000s)	4,044.6	83.1	67.9	12.4	2.8
On a government scheme (000s)	14.3	1.7	1.3	0.2	0.1
Unemployed (000s)	149.5	6.3	4.2	1.7	0.3
Unemployment rate	3.6	6.8	5.7	11.5	7.9

Sources: 1991 Census Local Base Statistics (ESRC purchase); Crown Copyright and OPCS/GRO(Scotland) (1994) Country of Birth and Ethnic Group report (HMSO).

Note: This table is based on a 10 per cent sample of Census returns. The population estimates were obtained by multiplying the sample counts by 10.162.

There are substantial variations in the percentage highly qualified by age. This is lowest for those of pensionable age, amongst whom possession of such qualifications is twice as common for white people as for South Asians. Amongst those aged under pensionable age, the percentage of 30-44 year olds who are highly qualified is higher than for either older or younger

age groups in the white, Indian and Pakistani ethnic groups (for Bangladeshis, the percentage qualified is highest for 45-59/64 year olds)<sup>13</sup>. In the youngest age group, the percentage of Indians qualified is higher than that for white people, twice the corresponding percentage for Pakistanis and more than four times that for Bangladeshis. For 30-44 year olds, the percentage of white people qualified is 2.7 per cent higher than that of Indians, with the percentage of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis again far lower than for the other two ethnic groups. Amongst those aged from 45 to pensionable age, the percentage of Indians qualified is again just higher than that of white people.

The economic activity rate for the highly qualified exceeds the overall average for the ethnic group as a whole for both white and South Asian people. A slightly higher percentage of highly qualified Indian people than white people are economically active, while more than four-fifths of both Pakistanis and Bangladeshis with higher education qualifications participate in the labour market. Possession of such qualifications does lead to greater success in the labour market, since the unemployment rate for the highly qualified in each ethnic group is much lower than that for all economically active persons. Nevertheless, highly qualified people from the South Asian ethnic groups still experience considerable disadvantage, relative to white people. The unemployment rate for Indians is markedly higher than that for white people, and that for Pakistanis twice as high. However, the possession of higher education qualifications has a much greater beneficial effect for Bangladeshis, since their unemployment rate for qualified people is substantially smaller than for all people from this ethnic group, lying well below that for Pakistanis and just over twice the unemployment rate for white people.

## 8. Conclusions

This Statistical Paper has presented a range of new information on the demographic, health, housing and economic circumstances of people from South Asian ethnic groups. The key findings are;

- There were nearly 1.5 million people in the three South Asian ethnic groups in April 1991, representing 2.7 per cent of the British population;
- South Asian people are younger on average than white people. People in the Indian ethnic group are older on average than Pakistanis and Bangladeshi people;
- The median age of Bangladeshi people is around 17 years;
- Half of all Pakistani people and a third of all Bangladeshi people were born in the UK;
- Indian people are more widespread within Britain than other South Asians, but still mainly located in the South-East, midlands and "Pennine" regions;
- Pakistani people have a greater concentration in the midlands and northern England;
- Bangladeshi people are highly concentrated geographically, with Inner London and Birmingham containing the majority of people from this ethnic group;
- South Asians form a very high percentage of some parliamentary constituencies in Birmingham, parts of London and provincial cities like Leicester and Bradford. In these areas, South Asian children also represent a large proportion of the school-age population of some Local Education Authorities;
- South Asian households are much larger on average than white households, on average. Bangladeshi-headed households contain 5.3 people, compared to an average of 2.4 people in white-headed households;
- Indian and Pakistani households are more likely than white households to own their own homes. Bangladeshi people are more likely to live in rented accommodation than white people, and are more likely than the other South Asian ethnic groups to live in public-sector accommodation;
- Bangladeshis suffer poorer physical housing conditions than white people or other South Asian ethnic groups, with a greater degree of overcrowding and a higher incidence of shared bathrooms and WCs. In contrast, Indian households display a higher level of car ownership than white households;
- The percentage of families headed by a lone parent is similar for the white, Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic groups, but slightly smaller for Indian people. Amongst married couples, a much higher percentage of South Asian than white families have dependent children;
- When age structure is taken into account, South Asian ethnic groups emerge as having poorer levels of health than white people. Pakistani and Bangladeshi people suffer higher relative illness rates than Indian people;
- South Asian people have lower economic activity rates than white people. The activity rates of Indian people are most similar to white people, while Bangladeshis have the lowest rates of participation in the labour market;
- Part-time working is less common for South Asian women than white women;
- South Asians are more likely than white people to be business people;
- A higher percentage of Indian and Pakistani than white people work in manufacturing industry, especially textiles & clothing, while Bangladeshis mainly work in distribution;
- South Asian people are less likely than white people to have managerial, white-collar or skilled manual jobs, but are more likely to be proprietors, doctors or semi-skilled workers;
- South Asian people have higher unemployment rates than white people, across all age groups, industries and occupations;
- The percentage of people with further and higher education qualifications is higher than white people for Indian people but lower for Pakistanis and Bangladeshis;
- Amongst the highly-qualified, unemployment rates for South Asians are well above that for white people.

## 9. Notes and references

- 1 The Samples of Anonymised Records consist of the responses for a 2 per cent sample of all individuals and a 1 per cent sample of all households in Great Britain. They permit a range of information not available from the standard tables released by OPCS and GRO (Scotland) to be derived.
- 2 This may also be related to the underestimation of the number of men aged 20-29 in each ethnic group by the 1991 Census. At the national scale, the population figures should be multiplied by the following factors for Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, respectively. Males aged 20-24; 1.12, 1.14, 1.14. Males aged 25-29; 1.13, 1.15, 1.16. Females aged 20-24; 1.03, 1.04, 1.04. Females aged 25-29; 1.04, 1.05, 1.05. These figures are taken from OPCS/GRO[S] [1994] **Country of Birth and Ethnic Group** (HMSO: London), p7.
- 3 The regional and county-level distribution of the South Asian ethnic groups has already been analysed in Owen, D. (1992) **Ethnic Minorities in Great Britain: Settlement Patterns**, NEMDA 1991 Census Statistical Paper no 1, Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations, University of Warwick.
- 4 These maps are based on the "location quotient" for each ethnic group. This is the ratio of the percentage of the population from a given ethnic group in an area to the percentage of the population of Great Britain from that ethnic group. Thus, values less than 1.0 occur where the representation of an ethnic group in an area is less than its share of the British population; values above 1.0 represent relative concentration of the ethnic group. The areas mapped are local authority districts.
- 5 In Forrest, R. and Gordon, D. (1993) **People and Places: a 1991 census atlas of England** (School of Advanced Urban Studies: Bristol), out of 367 local authority districts in England, Tower Hamlets was found to have the fifth highest level of "social deprivation" and the eighth highest level of "material deprivation".
- 6 Though it should be noted that this figure may be inflated by their location in some of the larger conurbations of Britain, where the lack of a car is a less serious limitation on the daily activity of a household due to the existence of better public transport than elsewhere, and where overall levels of car ownership are thus lower than in suburban and rural areas.
- 7 This involves calculating the proportion of the entire population in an age group for Great Britain as a whole and applying this percentage to the age-disaggregated population of each ethnic group to yield a hypothetical number of long-term ill persons, if the ethnic group suffered the same age-specific illness rates as the population as a whole. The actual number of long-term ill persons can then be expressed as a ratio of the hypothetical number, and if greater than 1, the ethnic group can be said to have poorer health than the population as a whole. The calculation excludes persons in communal establishments, since these include hospitals, which would tend to artificially inflate illness rates.
- 8 However, the choice of the appropriate age range over which to calculate it strongly influences the result. The usual definition of the economically active age range is from 16 to retirement age (59 for women and 64 for men), but many people remain in the labour force beyond conventional retirement age. Many analysts thus base the calculation on all persons aged over 16, but this clearly greatly depresses the white economic activity rate relative to that based on 16-59/64 year olds, and leads to the conclusion that a higher percentage of Indian than white people are in the labour force; with the contrast especially marked for women. This is unrealistic, because the calculation for white people includes a large number of retired people. Since South Asian people are much younger on average, retirement has much less influence upon their economic activity rates (Indians are the only South Asian ethnic group for whom the percentage of retired people is significant).
- 9 Brown, C. (1984) **Black and White Britain: The Third PSI Survey** (PSI: London).
- 10 It does not mean that these women are not working as well as looking after their families; these women may also be engaged in homeworking or in family businesses.
- 11 These tables include both employees and the self-employed.
- 12 Jones, T. (1993) **Britain's Ethnic Minorities** (PSI: London).
- 13 This is because educational opportunities were more limited for older people, while younger people have had less time in which to obtain these qualifications, and many will not have completed their education.

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