findings

Ethnic minorities in the inner city

Most of Britain's ethnic minority population lives in the major cities, particularly the inner city. Given the high levels of deprivation in inner cities, most tend to live in deprived areas. This analysis, by Richard Dorsett of the Policy Studies Institute, explores where concentrations of people from different ethnic minority groups are likely to occur and examines the factors which influence this. He found that:

- In terms of deprivation:

  Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are most likely to live in the most deprived wards. White people live in wards with the lowest levels of deprivation.

  However, there is variation between conurbations. This is most noticeable in the case of Indians/African-Asians. In London, this group lives in wards with a lower level of deprivation than do white people but in the West Midlands lives in wards with a higher level of deprivation than white people.

- In terms of population concentration:

  The ethnic minority population is concentrated in the major cities, particularly London. Whilst concentration is usually highest in inner cities, in London it is highest in the outer city area.

  White people live in areas of low ethnic minority population regardless of their level of deprivation. This is shown most powerfully in London where, despite having levels of deprivation similar to those of some ethnic minority groups, they always live in areas with much smaller ethnic minority populations.

  Although owner-occupiers are less likely to live in deprived wards, they are more likely to live in wards with a high concentration of ethnic minority groups. This is particularly the case for South Asians in London, with this group tending to build communities in wards of relative affluence.

- The researcher concludes that significant variations between minorities justify a separate focus on the different minority ethnic groups in terms of both deprivation and population concentration - in recognition of the fact that these two characteristics do not always go hand-in-hand.

findings SEPTEMBER 1998

Background

People from ethnic minority groups are over-represented in deprived inner-city areas. However, there are significant differences between ethnic minority groups. Socio-economic characteristics exert an important influence.

The reasons for living in a particular conurbation are likely to be largely historical. Location within that conurbation is likely to be more closely related to current circumstances. For this reason, this study concentrates on the characteristics of wards relative to their particular conurbation.

The concentration of particular groups

High concentration of people from ethnic minority communities is principally an urban characteristic. It is more typical of London than of other cities. However, unlike other cities, concentration in London is higher in the outer city than the inner city. London and the West Midlands are the two conurbations with the highest concentration of people from ethnic minority groups.

Overall, Bangladeshis and Pakistanis live in wards with the highest concentrations of people from ethnic minorities. Across all conurbations, Indians/African-Asians and Pakistanis tend to live in wards where their own ethnic group accounts for approximately half of all minority ethnic groups. However, there are some differences between conurbations:

In the West Midlands, the Caribbean, Pakistani and Bangladeshi populations are more concentrated than they are in London but the Indian population is more dispersed. For African-Asians, the difference between the two conurbations is more marginal.

Pakistanis in West Yorkshire live in wards with the highest concentration of any ethnic minority group in any conurbation.

In London, in contrast with other conurbations, the proportion of the population from an ethnic minority is highest in the outer part of the city. This suggests that there is something different about the inner and outer city divide in London compared with other cities.

Chinese people in London tend to live in wards with a very low minority concentration.

Controlling for individual variation, white people living in the West Midlands are less likely to live in areas with a high ethnic minority concentration than they are in London. For Caribbeans, the reverse is true. The effect is more mixed for South Asian people. In the West Midlands, Pakistanis and, especially, Bangladeshis tend to live in wards with a higher level of concentration than they do in London. For Indian and African-Asian Hindus, living in the West Midlands is associated with living in wards with a lower concentration. This effect is particularly marked for Indians.

There is a noticeable 'South Asian effect' in London; controlling for individual variation, Indian and African-Asian Hindus, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis all live in wards with high levels of concentration. Caribbeans live in wards with lower levels of concentration than the South Asians.

What affects concentration

In addition the study identified a number of characteristics which affected whether people were likely to live in areas with a high concentration of people from ethnic minority groups:

Ethnic and social background

There is some tendency for more recent immigrants to live in wards with a high ethnic minority concentration.

Those who are not fluent in English are more likely to live in areas with a higher ethnic minority concentration.

Those in the highest social class live in areas with a lower concentration of ethnic minority communities. This effect is more marked for white people than for other ethnic groups, with the exception of Indian and African-Asian Hindus in the highest social classes.

Religion

For Indians, Muslims are the most likely to live in areas of high concentration, with Sikhs living in areas with the lowest concentration. For African-Asians, however, it is the Hindus who live in the areas of highest ethnic minority concentration. For all three religions, these links are more marked for Indians than for African-Asians.

Household composition

Individuals in all-white partnerships live in wards with the lowest levels of concentration, followed by those in mixed white/minority partnerships.

Skills and employment

For ethnic minorities, those on lower incomes tend to live in areas with higher concentration. For white people, there is no association. Similarly, while being educated to at least A-level has little effect on concentration for white people, it is associated with lower concentration for ethnic minorities.

The more paid workers there are in a household, the less likely they are to live in areas with a high concentration of ethnic minority population.

Tenure

Owner-occupation increases concentration for all ethnic minority groups, apart from those who have bought from social housing, who are in wards with the lowest concentration.

People from ethnic minority groups who rent privately are in the wards with the highest concentration.

Levels of deprivation

Levels of deprivation for the population as a whole are higher in the urban areas than elsewhere. As well as having the largest ethnic minority populations, London has the highest level of deprivation, with the West Midlands the second highest level. Inner city wards as a whole have higher levels of deprivation than those in outer cities.

White people consistently live in wards with a lower level of deprivation than do people from ethnic minorities The exception to this is in inner London where levels of deprivation are broadly similar (deprivation for white people is higher in London than in other cities). Across all conurbations, Bangladeshis live in the most deprived wards, followed by Pakistanis and Caribbeans. Indians live in wards with a slightly higher level of deprivation than do African-Asians and Chinese people. It is Pakistanis and Bangladeshis who are most likely to live in the most deprived wards. White people live in wards with the lowest levels of deprivation.

There is considerable variation across conurbations. This is most noticeable in the case of Indians/African-Asians. In London, this group lives in wards with a lower level of deprivation than do white people but in the West Midlands lives in wards with a higher level of deprivation than white people.

In London, white people tend to live in wards with a higher level of deprivation than Indian and African-Asian Hindus. Pakistanis and Chinese people tend to live in wards with equal levels of relative deprivation. Bangladeshis and, in particular, Caribbeans live in the most deprived wards.

In the West Midlands, white people live in the wards with the lowest levels of relative deprivation by a substantial margin, despite their deprivation being slightly higher than that of white people in London. For most other ethnic groups, deprivation is much higher than in London.

Factors associated with deprivation

The study identified a number of personal characteristics and socio-economic factors which were associated with living in a deprived ward.

Social background

Being in a higher social class is associated with lower relative deprivation.

Religion

Respondents for whom religion is very important live in more deprived wards than those with no religion or for whom religion is not important.

Among South Asians, Muslims tend to live in wards with a high level of relative deprivation and a high minority ethnic concentration. Hindus and Sikhs, on the other hand, live in wards with quite high concentration but a low level of deprivation.

Among Indians and African-Asians, Sikhs live in wards with a slightly lower level of relative deprivation than do Hindus. Conversely, Muslims live in wards with a higher level of deprivation.

Household composition

Where a family is mixed, with a white member plus a member from a minority ethnic group, the level of deprivation is very low, comparable to that of all-white partnerships. Although those in all-Indian partnerships may live in areas of low deprivation, they may also live in areas of high minority concentration.

Couples tend to live in wards with lower deprivation. They also tend to live in more mixed populations, although this pattern is not nearly so marked.

Skills and employment

Higher levels of qualification are associated with lower levels of deprivation. The same overall pattern is evident when considering minority concentration, albeit less marked.

For minorities, being educated to A-level standard or higher reduces the level of deprivation.

Individuals with higher incomes are less likely to live in deprived wards.

The more paid workers there are in a household, the lower is the level of general deprivation of the ward in which they live. For ethnic minorities, concentration varies in a similar way.

Households with a higher level of income are more likely to be in wards with a low level of deprivation and ethnic minority concentration.

Tenure

For all ethnic groups, owner-occupiers are more likely to live in areas with lower relative deprivation than are people who rent.

Those who own or are buying property which was previously privately owned live in less deprived wards than those with other types of tenure. People from ethnic minorities who are in social housing or shared accommodation live in the most deprived areas.

Summary

To sum up, white people appear to live in areas of low ethnic minority population regardless of their level of deprivation. This is shown most powerfully in London where, despite having levels of deprivation similar to those of some ethnic minorities, white people always live in areas with much smaller ethnic minority populations.

Another important point is the extent to which there is a 'South Asian effect' in London, with this group tending to build communities in wards of relative affluence.

The relationship between personal characteristics/circumstances and deprivation is as expected: those individual characteristics which are commonly associated with a lower standard of living are also associated with living in a deprived area.

Concentration is more interesting. Many of the same associations with individual characteristics are found as when considering deprivation. There are some notable differences, however. For example, whereas owner-occupiers are less likely to live in deprived wards, they are more likely to live in wards with a high concentration of ethnic minority groups. After controlling for other factors, this suggests the possibility of a 'community' of relatively affluent ethnic minority owner-occupiers.

Conclusion

This research was intended to enable regeneration policy to focus more sharply on ethnic issues. The results support a separate focus on different minority ethnic groups since there are significant variations in the extent to which different ethnic minority groups live in areas of high deprivation and minority concentration.

The experience of South Asians (with the exception of Bangladeshis) in outer London, who live in wards of relative affluence yet high minority concentration, is illuminating. It demonstrates that economic progress is not inevitably tied to geographic dispersion. Residential location for ethnic minorities is the result of a complex interplay of choices and constraints. The researcher therefore concludes that distinct policies are needed to address the separate issues of deprivation and concentration.

About the study

This analysis was based on data from the Fourth National Survey of Ethnic Minorities, which was carried out in 1994. This is a nationally representative sample of 5,196 people of Caribbean and Asian origin together with a comparison sample of 2,867 white people. This was supplemented by area information taken from the 1991 Census and from the Department of Environment's Index of Local Conditions.

How to get further information

A full report, Ethnic minorities in the inner city by Richard Dorsett, is published by The Policy Press in association with the Foundation (ISBN 1 86134 130 X, price £12.95).

JR

Published by the
Joseph Rowntree Foundation
The Homestead, 40 Water End, York YO30 6WP
Tel: 01904 629241 Fax: 01904 620072
http://www.jrf.org.uk

ISSN 0958-3084