

# Mapping rapidly changing minority ethnic populations: a case study of York

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Gary Craig, Sue Adamson,  
Nasreen Ali and Fasil Demsash

**Official statistics can be of limited help to those providing services to increasingly diverse populations. Using an innovative approach, this project drew on both formal and informal sources to estimate the size and diversity of York's minority ethnic population and the implications for key policy and service agencies.**

The project was commissioned by the JRF's York Grants Committee, which makes modest grants to organisations to help improve the general quality of life in York. The Committee wanted a more up-to-date picture of the city's population than Census data offers, to help inform its work.

This summary looks at:

- the approach piloted by the project
- what this approach found
- the project team's recommendations for policy and service organisations in York

The project suggests that York's population is much more ethnically diverse than is often supposed, identifying 78 different first languages within the city. It also concludes that the proportion of the population from minority ethnic groups has grown substantially since the 2001 census. While the analysis cannot be statistically robust (because of the lack of up-to-date data), the researchers conclude that combining analysis of official data with a range of less formal sources in this way can give a much fuller picture of local populations. Other local authorities could use this relatively inexpensive approach to inform policy development and service delivery.

# Background

The minority ethnic population of the UK is growing steadily; in some areas, particularly rural areas and some towns and cities, growth is relatively rapid. One national study (Parkinson, M. et al., *The State of English Cities*, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2006) has identified York as a city where the minority ethnic population appears to be growing more rapidly than in most other areas. This is due in part to key areas of the local economy (tourism and higher education) depending heavily on involvement in the local labour market by those from other countries.

However, official data sets provide limited help to local authorities anxious to ensure that they are shaping policy development and service delivery to meet the needs of changing demography. This project set out to try and map the size and diversity of ethnic minority groups using not only official national data sets but a range of other research techniques and data sources. Many of the circumstances in York may apply to similarly sized cities and towns and other local authorities could potentially use this approach.

## The approach

The census provides data once every ten years. Because results are finally available three years after the census is taken, there may be as much as thirteen years between the snapshot of one set of data and the next becoming accessible. The Quarterly Labour Force Survey is far more frequent, but only surveys a relatively small number of people: for any single local authority, the number of ethnic minority respondents likely to be captured may be very small – possibly less than 10. In areas where there has been a recent substantial rise in the number of migrant workers, specific data sets such as the Workers Registration Scheme data or National Insurance Numbers (NINo) may help to give a more rounded picture but these data generally only apply to a limited range of minority ethnic groups.

This project involved a number of standard research techniques, such as policy and literature review, secondary data analysis and mapping, and qualitative interviews. However, these were supplemented by a range of less formal techniques,

such as the collection of administrative employment data from local organisations, observation and networking.

The methodology was not particularly complex but required the ability to draw together a very wide range of data from very differing kinds of source. In addition, the researchers had to be very flexible in following up possible lines of enquiry.

The project was complicated by a number of factors including:

- considerable movement across the York/North Yorkshire border which affected both housing and labour market issues;
- the reluctance of private sector agencies to provide data;
- inconsistency and gaps in the presentation of data by public sector organisations;
- the pace of change, and the arrival of irregular or non-recorded migrants; and
- the very limited number of organisations in York working directly with Black and minority ethnic communities.

## What this project found

In the 2001 Census, York's minority ethnic population (i.e. all those not categorised as White, White other or White British) was 2.1 per cent and for those not categorised as White British was 4.9 per cent, much lower than the averages for the UK population as a whole.

The project's analysis of administrative data from the employment records of York's public bodies provided a profile of much more ethnically diverse workforces than had been commonly understood.

Most public agencies had reasonably coherent ethnic monitoring schemes although some had invented ethnic categories of their own (for example, 'oriental') which did not match census categories or had drilled down to national categories such as Serbian. In most cases, organisations had failed to achieve a target (which many had set themselves) of ethnic minority recruitment matching the profile of

the population at large in York (around 6 per cent). (The team had also hoped to examine data on the grades at which minorities were working but such data was relatively sparse.) The total number of minorities covered by this public sector data alone was itself close to the total number recorded in the 2001 census but this did not include all private and third sector employers, children under school age and those out of the labour market.

The private sector employs many more people in York than the public sector. However, data from private sector agencies was far less easy to obtain. Most private sector employers did not respond to letters asking for details of their workforce. Those that did respond were either not prepared to release ethnic monitoring data to the team or did not keep such data.

Data on migrant workers is complicated by the fact that many workers may live in one authority and work in another. In this case, many more live in York than the surrounding North Yorkshire area because of the supply of low-cost housing. In addition, those migrant workers who are self-employed are not required to register with the Workers Registration Scheme and those leaving the UK are not obliged to deregister. Taking these conditions into account, the study estimated that at least 800 migrant workers were working in the city and many more living there. This cross-border movement points to the need for neighbouring local authorities to collaborate over service provision. The issue of migrant workers also raises the problems of the transitory nature of some minority populations, which is likely to increase their vulnerability.

The less formal types of fieldwork demonstrated that the numbers of minority ethnic establishments and facilities in York are substantially greater and more diverse than is recognised formally by service providers. Places such as restaurants, fast food establishments, places of worship and linked faith-based activities, informal groupings and networks may provide access points for reaching minorities which are as useful as more formal organisational routes.

Despite a popular perception of York as a largely 'white' city with no more than six or seven minority

Table 1: First languages identified within York

Albanian	Gujarati	Polish
Arabic	Hindi	Portuguese
Armenian	Hungarian	Punjabi
Azeri	Icelandic	Pushto
Baganda	Ibo	Rumanian
Belarussian	Iraqi	Russian
Bemba	Italian	Rwandan
Bengali	Japanese	Serbo-Croat
Bulgarian	Katchi	Shona
Cantonese	Kazakhi	Slovakian
Chichewa	Kokomba	Slovenian
Chinese	Korean	Swahili
Croatian	Kurdish	Spanish
Czech	Latvian	Sudanese
Danish	Lebanese	Swedish
Dutch	Lithuanian	Syrian
Egyptian	Malay	Tagalog
Estonian	Malayalam	Tamil
Fante	Mandarin	Telugh
Faroese	Marathi	Thai
Farsi	Mende	Turkish
Filipino	Moldovan	Twi
Finnish	Mongolian	Ukrainian
Flemish	Nawari	Urdu
German	Nepali	Uzbek
Greek	Norwegian	Yoruba

groups present, the study identified 92 different ethnic/national origins present in the city and 78 different first languages (see Table 1). Although a few ethnically-based community organisations had existed for some years, most of the ethnic groups identified took the form of informal networks and groupings, often focused around a specific activity such as worship, language or economic activity.

To estimate the minority ethnic population of York the team drew on the information gathered and made assumptions about the growth of the minority population between 2006 and 2009, about the presence of large numbers of minorities not recorded by official data sets (including irregular workers), and the growth of key industrial sectors, particularly higher education (the city's two universities are committed to substantial expansion including from overseas) and the service sector (e.g. tourism, leisure and financial services), both critical to the future of York's economy. Official data do not inform

us of how many people left York. Based on this the team estimates the minority ethnic population (that is, all groups other than White British) in 2009 to be approximately 21,800 or 11% of York's total estimated population. This estimate is substantially higher than the figures generally used within the city by policy and service agencies and more than twice the size of the Black and minority ethnic population recorded in the 2001 census.

## Conclusions and recommendations

The researchers make a number of strategic recommendations for organisations in York, including:

- strengthening the commitment to racial equality across the city, including encouraging major private sector agencies to engage in ethnic monitoring of their workforces, and to combating racism, which some key agencies perceive to be a growing problem in the area;
- as part of this approach, the city could market and profile its commitment to racial equality and diversity more strongly to the outside world;
- the desirability of consistency and coherence in ethnic monitoring across all organisations, including not only collecting data but using it to inform policy development and service delivery, moving away from 'ethnic origin' as the only basis for targeting resources;
- more effective and targeted recruitment of and support for minority ethnic employees;
- greater investment in services and provision for minorities, including support for organisations which are representative of particular minority groups;
- highlighting and responding to the needs of more vulnerable groups, including 'hidden' and

irregular workers, of which there is probably a growing number – this is an issue where a response could be led by individual trades unions, the regional TUC and local advice agencies and the third sector more generally.

These recommendations suggest that understanding the changing nature of the labour market is key to understanding the growth of the minority population.

The project also identified recommendations for specific York-based organisations, the potential of better cross-organisational working and planning (for example, between housing and education services), and for further investigation of some key areas, including the social and economic needs of specific minority groups, and ways in which informal networks and support groups could be sustained with modest resource inputs.

The research team suggests that, with relatively modest investment, local authorities making use of this approach to mapping the size and diversity of their minority populations have the potential to make a disproportionately positive impact on their quality of life.

## About the project

This project was commissioned by the JRF's York Grant Committee, which makes modest grants to organisations to help improve the general quality of life in York. The Committee wanted an up-to-date picture of the city to help inform its work. The research team was led by Gary Craig, Visiting Professor, University of Durham and Professor Emeritus of Social Justice and Associate Fellow, WISE, University of Hull.

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## For more information

The full report, ***Mapping rapidly changing minority ethnic populations : a case study of York*** by Gary Craig, Sue Adamson, Nasreen Ali and Fasil Demsash, is available for download at [www.jrf.org.uk](http://www.jrf.org.uk).

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Tel: 01904 615905 email: [info@jrf.org.uk](mailto:info@jrf.org.uk)