

# Immigration and inclusion in South Wales

Findings  
Informing change

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This research explores the impact of new migration on receiving communities, in particular on community, integration and cohesion. Based on research carried out in Cardiff and Merthyr Tydfil, it explores the perspectives of both new and settled residents.

## Key points

- For new migrants, economic integration seemed a necessary precursor for inclusion and cohesion; those who were able to work were viewed more favourably by settled populations. But economic integration was no guarantee. Discrimination and negative media portrayals were cited as particular barriers by new migrants, while in some apparently integrated and cohesive settled contexts, particular vulnerable groups (e.g. older people and women) remained excluded.
- There was no evidence that community tensions are an inevitable consequence of new immigration. White immigration, whether middle-class professional, student or migrant worker, appeared to be invisible to local populations in Cardiff. Educated migrants with good English, whatever their ethnic or national background or migrant status, and whether living in deprived or affluent areas, integrated more easily than others.
- Age-based and generational tensions of different kinds existed across all the groups and geographical areas studied. Among young people, some expressed hostility toward migrants; others shared education, sport and social outings together. Older people in all groups expressed anxieties about the behaviours of young people.
- Poverty and deprivation had a direct and negative impact on inclusion and cohesion in the case study areas. People who were poor or living in deprived areas, from both migrant and settled communities, felt they were treated poorly by those in positions of power and described similar discrimination and attitudes among service providers. Visibly different migrant interviewees related this to issues of race, but the research suggests that it is also class-based.
- Social class differences were a complex but important factor in shaping people's experiences of inclusion and cohesion and in shaping community responses to new migration.

## The research

By a team from the School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies, Cardiff University

## Background

The findings of this research link closely to current Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) initiatives, including the recently published Welsh Refugee Inclusion Strategy and the current development of a community cohesion policy for Wales, both of which connect to UK-level initiatives like the Report of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion.

## Economic integration

Economic integration was found to be a necessary but not sufficient prerequisite for inclusion and cohesion. Whilst migration (particularly, but not only, white) into affluent middle-class areas seemed to be unproblematic, migration (particularly involving visible or language difference) into deprived working-class communities was not. However, the ability of new migrants to work was viewed favourably by all settled populations (except those where interviewees expressed a view that 'worklessness cultures' were the norm) and appeared to assist the integration process.

In Butetown, a relatively deprived multi-ethnic community in Cardiff, residents recalled an older multicultural harmony with nostalgia, but many interviewees from the current receiving community resented incomers who didn't work and took resources to which they felt others were entitled: "In the old days everyone who came here worked and paid their way." This contrasts with the unproblematic acceptance of working newcomers, including Chinese restaurant workers, in middle-class Llandaff, and of student populations in Cathays-Roath. Although poor themselves, and sometimes regarded by other residents as a nuisance, the students were perceived to bring economic benefit and were therefore accepted.

Ethnic groups who employed their own incomers in ethnic-specific trades (for example, Chinese incomers who were employed in catering) were simply invisible to the rest of the population. One professionally qualified refugee told us that "work is people's hobby in the UK. If you can't participate you can never be integrated".

Black and visibly different new migrants who were not working felt that they were identified by the host community as 'scroungers', 'bogus', and a drain on scarce resources. They felt that they were unwelcome, and that they tended to be identified with the

perpetrators of acts of crime and terrorism. They saw media representations as particularly damaging and unhelpful:

**"They don't like you because of the media ... So when they see black person they think that this one is a refugee, automatically ... You see, you feel like you are not welcome." (Congolese refugee)**

Black asylum seekers and refugees also reported discrimination in the job market, and felt there was a hierarchy for job allocations, with Welsh people at the top, ethnic minorities with citizenship in the middle and black refugees at the bottom.

Given the importance of integration, it is remarkable that people from all minority groups, whether settled or new migrants, felt they had experienced racism and discrimination, and/or inadequate access and provision, in relation to all of the key indicators of economic and social integration, such as English language translation and interpretation, housing, education, employment, healthcare, policing and community safety. The same forms of discrimination were in fact described by working-class interviewees on housing estates and by students in Cathays.

Asked about discrimination in Cardiff, a group of third generation British ethnic minority women, all with degrees and in employment, talked about feeling excluded by indirect forms of racism: "the way they [white people] look at you, the way they talk to you", and about being stereotyped by the police:

**"You've got your headscarf on, automatically it means that you're a ... [The police] assume that you've got no English ... And when the words come out of your mouth, you're looked at differently."**

It is also clear that apparent inclusion and/or cohesion, the fact that a community is 'settled' and does not appear to have or cause problems, may leave vulnerable groups of women or older people in dependent and excluded positions. This was as true of isolated older residents in Llandaff, as it was of very young women with no English in Butetown's Yemeni community. Chinese participants spoke of difficulties faced by Chinese older people who, having worked all their lives in Chinese kitchens, had had no opportunity to learn English. Language and other cultural barriers also seemed to stop Somali, West Indian and Asian older people in the STAR area (Splott, Tremorfa, Adamsdown and Roath) from accessing charities such as Age Concern:

“I mean it is worrying because we know that the ethnic [older] population has increased but they don’t seem to come to us.” (Staff worker)

## Community tensions and new immigration

The study found no evidence that community tensions are an inevitable consequence of new immigration.

White, middle-class (often English) migrants and educated international groups from many ethnic backgrounds have moved apparently invisibly into middle-class suburbs in Cardiff, in the same way as transient populations of home and international students in the Cathays-Roath area around Cardiff University, and the very diverse, and apparently self-sufficient Chinese groups in Cardiff, come and go largely without notice. These groups were never discussed as ‘migrants’ by those who were interviewed and were never perceived as being any kind of threat to cohesion.

In the multiethnic, diverse STAR area, there were examples of tensions where long-established residents resented what they saw as the noise, overcrowding, drain on resources and unfair burden placed on deprived areas by asylum seekers and migrant workers, and felt that middle-class areas were not taking their share of the strain. However, these tensions were rare and were managed very effectively by community police and faith leaders. Co-existence without much interaction appeared to be the norm.

In Merthyr Tydfil, local working-class people resented Portuguese migrant workers because they were perceived to be taking over local public and social spaces such as the supermarkets, the schools, the library, the town centre, the meat factories and the pubs. Although interviewees talked of the Portuguese “taking our jobs”, they also acknowledged: “They’re working in terrible conditions, mind” and claimed not to want such jobs.

## Generational tensions

Generational tensions of different kinds existed within and across all the groups and geographical areas studied.

Disadvantaged youth groups, including white working-class (predominantly male) groups, British-born mixed race youths on council estates and young Somali men seemed to live lives that were anything but ‘integrated’ or ‘cohesive’ in the policy senses of these terms. A

youth worker said of the mixed race youths with whom he worked:

“They got issues with [other areas], problems with other youths from other parts of Cardiff. They’re happy where they are and that’s it. They don’t want to mix with others.”

Other young people from ethnic minority communities, were keen to ‘stay off the streets’, to make sure their behaviour did not damage the reputation of their communities, and wanted to learn about other cultures and groups.

Adults from all the case study areas expressed anxieties about youth behaviour, youth crime, drug and alcohol abuse, teenagers’ social and sexual freedom, and a perceived general lack of respect among young people for parents and older people. New migrants expressed a need to protect their children from these perceived influences, whether they were single Somali mothers seeking asylum and living in poverty, third generation Muslim families from a variety of backgrounds, very recently arrived groups from the Sudan, Iraq, or the Yemen, or long-standing British Chinese or Somali residents. Middle-class and working-class white Welsh parents in Llandaff and Merthyr Tydfil expressed similar views. There is clear evidence that this is a barrier to cohesion across a range of contexts, but it is especially acute for new migrants:

“Do you know why we do not mix with the British? Because we are afraid that our children might behave like them. We come from a different culture and there are no limits to what they can do.” (Yemeni respondent)

Young people themselves, from all ethnic groups, often saw this very differently, and were keen to ‘integrate’, to mix with other groups, and to adapt to the new environment.

## Social class, poverty and deprivation

“We used to talk about class and class divisions, class conflict, but these terms have gone out of fashion. But really, they are in many ways at the basis of the issue of social cohesion.” (Policy director, political party)

Significant class differences within and across the communities and areas in this study affected the ways in which inclusion and cohesion were experienced. The most vulnerable new migrants inevitably moved into some of the most ‘deprived’ areas in Cardiff. Poverty was therefore a central condition of many of

the participants' lives, and was a clear barrier to both inclusion and cohesion.

The lives of both migrant and receiving communities in disadvantaged areas were marked by struggles for scarce resources, restricted social mobility, prejudice from others, and bad experiences with housing, healthcare, employment and education. Migrants sometimes interpreted this as racism; others interpreted this as people in power just not caring. However, class background, and current life trajectories, made enormous differences to the way new migrants responded to poverty, to people's experience of migration, and to the ways in which settled communities and groups responded to them.

Middle-class ethnic community 'leaders', who were usually poor, under-employed or working as volunteers were often the ones with the right level of education and experience to allow them to negotiate with middle-class 'administrators' (for example, civil servants, councils, the police, teachers). A good deal of the work of making a community inclusive and cohesive appeared to fall on such individuals, yet their contribution was largely unrecognised.

## Conclusion

The research suggests that there are as many forms of community and cohesion, and indeed stages and kinds of integration, as there are localities in Cardiff and Merthyr Tydfil. It is possible for groups to live 'parallel' lives without any apparent impact on community cohesion, but in fact the appearance of integration and cohesion can conceal real need. Social class, race, age, gender and relative wealth and poverty, in both new and receiving communities, were found to be key factors in determining what kind of 'inclusion' and 'cohesion' would be the result of these new migrations.

## About the study

The fieldwork took place between January 2005 and June 2006 in eight communities (geographical areas and ethnic groups) in South-East Wales. These included: a group of 'administrators' who worked in policy, policy implementation, or in the delivery of services; the Somali community; the Chinese community; a cluster of Arabic speaking communities (principally the Yemenis, Iraqis and Sudanese); the Cathays area, located around Cardiff University; the Splott, Tremorfa, Adamsdown and Roath (STAR) area of Cardiff; Llandaff (a middle-class suburb to the north-west of the city); and Merthyr Tydfil (a valleys town to the north-west of the city). The project combined participant observation with individual and paired interviews and focus groups, and spoke to people from diverse backgrounds, including new and recent arrivals in Wales and those who had been settled for some time; the groups also included children and young people. In total more than eighty focus group interviews and over a hundred individual and paired interviews were carried out.

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## Further information

The full report, **Immigration and inclusion in South Wales** by Terry Threadgold, Sadie Clifford, Abdi Arwo, Vanessa Powell, Zahera Harb, Xinyi Jiang and John Jewell is published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. It is available as a free download from [www.jrf.org.uk](http://www.jrf.org.uk).

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