



Will mixed race be the largest minority group by 2020? Not according to reliable data and projection figures...

The Growth of the 'Mixed Race' Population

"Mixed-race people are the fastest growing ethnic minority group (defined according to the National Statistics classification) in the UK and are predicted to be the largest minority group by 2020" [Wikipedia]

"The 2001 census recorded mixed race for the first time showing the UK has the largest mixed race population within the EU. This is the fastest growing demographic group here, with half mixed race Britons aged 18 years of age... by 2020 mixed race group will be the largest ethnic minority in Britain - increasing by 50% in the next decade" [PR Conversations website]

"The mixed race group is the fastest growing ethnic minority group in the UK and is expected to become the largest by 2020... If government watchdog figures are right, mixed race Britons will overtake Indian people to become the UK's largest ethnic minority group within 25 years, reaching 1.24 million. Seventeen-year-old Seeder is from Manchester. She said: 'I actually expected mixed raced people to be the biggest ethnicity'". [BBC radio 1]

Statements of this kind are not atypical of the views expressed in the blogosphere, in quality daily newspapers, and on radio and TV. They are difficult for the public to verify as statistics of the current growth rate of the 'mixed' group and its projected future size are hard to locate. Once subjected to print and unchallenged, they tend to gain credence and take on a life of their own as demographic fact. Indeed, when presented with the true picture, one event organiser recently suggested retaining these erroneous statements as they would attract more 'mixed race' people to the event.

The most reliable data on the growth rate of the 'mixed' group are the Experimental Population Estimates by Ethnic Group prepared annually by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) for England. They are called 'experimental' as the methodology to compile them is still subject to review. The latest figures – for mid-2007 – were published on 5 February 2010, so we can now calculate the growth rate of the Census ethnicity categories over a six-year period (mid-2001 to mid-2007). The 'Mixed: White and Black Caribbean' category grew the slowest of the four 'mixed' categories: from 234,400 to 282,900, a 20.7% increase.

The 'Other mixed group' increased from 154,300 to 212,000 (37.4%) and 'Mixed: White and Asian' from 187,200 to 260,900 (39.4%). However, the 'Mixed: White and Black African' category grew fastest of all, from 78,300 to 114,300, a rise of 46.0%. Although the growth rates of these 'mixed' categories were significant, they were not the highest. The 'Black or Black British: African' category increased from 491,100 to 730,600 over these six years, a rate of 48.8%. Further, the 'Chinese' category grew by a phenomenal 76.3%, from 227,000 to 400,300.

Population projections to 2010 and 2020 are much more difficult to compile as they involve complex calculations of future birth and death rates, fertility rates, and net migration. In Britain civil registration data (births and deaths) are not ethnically coded in spite of a recent review of these procedures and the requirements of the Race Relations Amendment Act 2001.

The most reliable projections available, prepared by Professor Phil Rees of Leeds University for the UK, indicate a 40% growth rate in the 'mixed' group between 2001 and 2010, to reach almost one million, and 30% during 2010-2020 to achieve around 1.2 million, although still smaller than the pan-ethnic Asian (3.5 million) and black (1.6 million) groups.

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People in Harmony - making mixed race matter

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