

METHODIST CONFERENCE 2003 REPORT

Committee for Racial Justice

SECTION I: BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY

1. In 2000 the Methodist Conference adopted the Committee for Racial Justice (CRJ) report and asked the CRJ to report back at a future date with specific recommendations concerning:

- improving the under-representation of Black and Asian people in decision-making processes and addressing their poor recruitment into lay and ordained ministries.
- adhering and fulfilling Conference 1989 resolutions by named Districts to send at least two Black people to Conference every year.
- encouraging Black and white people to participate in racism awareness training and empowerment programmes
- using the Wood Sheppard Principles to promote good employment policies and practices.

2. This report:

- re-states and re-emphasises the Biblical and theological basis of the Methodist Church's work for racial justice
- reviews recent events relating to racial justice in Britain and the wider world, and considers their implications for the Church and for individual Christians
- provides recommendations for future action.

3. A consultative approach was used for the production of this report. It involved interviews with the Co-ordinating Secretaries, selected District Racial Justice Secretaries, Methodist Association of Youth Clubs (MAYC) and many individuals inside and outside the Church. A review of the main documents relating to and wider society was also undertaken. An interview schedule was sent to each person and personal interviews were undertaken with some to verify responses. The report reflects their thinking and observations.

4. Section II outlines the theological basis of our work. Section III contains a review of current issues and recent events, in order to recall the wider context in which the report's recommendations are presented. Section IV provides recommendations and a plan of action. There also resolutions which propose how the Conference may respond.

SECTION II: THE THEOLOGICAL BASIS OF OUR WORK

5. The racial justice work in the Methodist Church is built on the convictions and traditions that have its genesis in the very origins of Methodism. John Wesley emphasised the following issues among many:

- the inclusive nature of the redemptive love of Jesus, implying God's call to each person to respond to that love
- the unity between worship and service
- giving priority to the materially and socially disadvantaged.

6. The vision of "Our Calling" urges the Methodist Church 'to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission'. All human beings are created in the image of God and therefore are of equal worth. They belong to a single race, the human race, and to a single global family, members one of another. The gospel of Christ values and proclaims principles of race equality and respect for human diversity. Therefore racism is not only an assault on human beings but also a desecration of the image of God in people. Racism - defined as beliefs, attitudes, actions and social structures that unfairly benefit some ethnic groups and cultures at the expense of others - is sin.

7. The gospel proclaims that the poorest and most vulnerable in our church and society should be given priority, and that all people work together for the common good. Luke 10: 25-37 tells the familiar story of the Samaritan who helped a victim of robbery. In the story a Priest and a Levite passed by without offering help to the injured man. They were pre-occupied with considerations of their duties and safety. They asked the question, "What would happen to me if I stopped to help this man? The Samaritan, an outsider, showed compassion and helped the injured man. He turned "me" into "him" - "If I don't help this man what will happen to him?"

8. Here lies the challenge for us as individuals and as a Church. The Methodist Church must return to the grassroots and side with the poor, the marginalised and the disadvantaged. It must thus cross the threshold from racism to the reign of God. In order for this to happen there are four requirements:

Let the Methodist Church name racism as the evil it is.

To name something is to have power over it. Jesus at one occasion asked a demon "What is your name?" "Legion" came the reply. This was the first step in breaking down the power of the force that oppressed the man who was among the tombs. A further difficulty in Britain is that racism is often associated with violence. Thus if we name this evil we can determine the framework for solutions.

"Do this in memory of me".

Each time we celebrate Eucharist, we are reminded of the brokenness of humanity and our oneness in God. We should never forget the origins of racism, in the development of the ideology of white supremacy and the justification of the slave trade. We need to correct past wrongs and to raise the visibility of other people's meaningful contributions to human development throughout history. This will enable us to sit at the table as equals.

Empowering of Black church members

There are many clouds that hang over us. One of them, which has serious implications for the development of the Church is the absence of Black people in Church structures and in leadership. Black membership is one of the most visible areas of growth in the Church yet Black people remain invisible and silent particularly in church leadership roles. White people who hold the reins in many of our congregations must work at establishing visibility of Black people. Let Black people tell their stories and help others to hear those stories without judging them.

From guilt to reconciliation

Racial awareness training, diversity and black empowerment programmes reveal another sad factor. At an intellectual level, the participants understand each other. However, one of the dangers is that white Christians, when they become aware of racism and injustice, sometimes feel consumed by guilt and depression. They worship at the shrine, it has been said, of “Our Lady of Perpetual Guilt”! This attitude is unhealthy psychologically, theologically and spiritually. As Christians we are called to engage in an authentic process that moves from guilt to confession, forgiveness, atonement and reconciliation. We need to be aware of the issues and be part of the solution away from guilt and paralysis.

9. The Methodist Church must redefine its values, its structures and its practices as part of the strategy towards healing and transformation against racism. It should not view Black and Asian people as a threat to its cultural identity and well being. Black and Asian people give the Church an opportunity to work and walk together with their rich gifts. Such an approach will enable the Church to build a society capable of celebrating unity while respecting diversity.

10. Over the centuries Christian churches and individuals have led opposition to racism and have undertaken initiatives to eradicate it in all its forms. Today, many individuals, local churches and organisations are at the forefront of opposition to racism. In the Methodist Church this is done through its race awareness training and preaching, in celebrating Racial Justice Sunday and the funding of multi-racial projects through the Multi-Racial Projects Fund (MRPF). The work against racism is global as seen through the work of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Durban 2001 United Nations World Conference Against Racism (UN-WCAR).

11. However, it must at the same time be acknowledged that over the centuries Christian churches and individuals have not consistently shown themselves to be opposed to racism in all its forms. On the contrary, churches have at times colluded with, or even given blessing to, the subordination and persecution of people whom they considered to be racially different and inferior (e.g. Apartheid South Africa, Rwandese genocide).

12. Actions by Christians against racism in the present must be accompanied by repentance for sins committed by Christians in the past. For true reconciliation to begin there must be recognition that institutional racism exists not only in secular organisations but also in our churches. Such repentance and reconciliation will only be effective if they are followed through by legislation, attitudinal change and good practice in all the life, work and decision making processes of the church.

United Nations (UN) World Conference Against Racism (WCAR)

13. The UNWCAR was held August/September 2001 in Durban, South Africa. Its witness and action against the sin of racism and for justice and life for the victims and survivors led the World Council of Churches (WCC) to enable churches and church-related programmes against racism and regional ecumenical organisations to participate in this world wide event.

14. Durban was a time for people to share their suffering and pain and resistance to racism. Indigenous peoples, Dalits, Palestinians and many victims of racism voiced their disappointment that rather than being enhanced, some of what had previously gained in international laws was threatened and put under scrutiny. Durban was also an opportunity to build bridges with one another and learn from each other's struggles. To struggle for justice was something that unite!

15. The challenge for the church is to learn how it will walk this journey. The challenge is always with us. The lessons learnt, the inputs gathered in these processes will be shared by many people of faith. Hopefully the results of Durban will be an instrument for our church and society to continue to walk this journey. The good news of the gospel has always been the inspiration for our actions and justice the energising force for our everyday life. A world without racism is the vision we cherish.

Institutional racism

16. The CRJ welcomes the recommendations of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report (The Macpherson Report), published in 1999 and also endorses the report's concept of institutional racism. The concept refers to attitudes, beliefs and stereotypes in the culture, customs and routines of an organisation and consequences of which are:

- (a) that Black, Asian and ethnic minority members of the public do not receive appropriate professional service.
- (a) that Black, Asian and ethnic minority staff are not sufficiently involved in the organisation's activities and leadership.
- (a) that patterns of inequality in wider society are perpetuated.

17. The CRJ challenges the Methodist Church to enter into a process of serious and more introspection to see whether any of these characteristics listed above are applicable to it at Conference, Connexional, District, Circuit and local levels. The Methodist Church should take action to eradicate these traits wherever they exist.

SECTION III: REVIEW OF ISSUES AND EVENTS

18. This section of the report considers a range of interacting factors: global connectedness; asylum issues; disorder and violence; media; religion and theology; civil liberties; the Far Right.

Global connectedness

19. One of the great challenges in an increasingly global society is to ensure that comprehensive connections are seen between events and phenomena of international significance and personal or

localised ideologies and behaviours. Through its calling of worship, service, learning, caring and evangelism, the Church is ideally placed to nurture a recognition and understanding of such interconnectedness. In the contexts of preaching and worship leading, practical action, teaching and theological thinking, it is possible to emphasise the point that what we do and think as individual Christians has a clear, if indirect, relationship with what happens on a global scale. This need not necessarily be a negative association, but unless there is a critical engagement with the process, subtle and negative influences may be allowed to operate.

20. Important aspects of global connectedness were signalled in autumn 2002 in an article in the journal *Race and Class*, published by the Institute of Race Relations (IRR) where Dr Sivanandan writes “The terrorist attacks of September 11 catapulted US military policy to the forefront of world attention and concern. Sections of the US ruling class have seized the crisis to advance a hegemonic and unilateralist strategy. But powerful globalist forces have argued that only multilateralism can ensure stability for capitalist expansion. This struggle is reflected within the military/industrial complex over a range of issues, including the nature of intervention, the need for allies, weapons systems, and the arms market.”

21. Racism and the refusal to address it adequately in its widest context will disadvantage many people in the world. One negative aspect of globalisation is that it fosters a type of homogeneity, which is mainly imposed by the dominant western culture and goes a long way to harbouring racism. Racism compounds inequality, which can become the seedbed for conflict. The Church needs to be at the forefront of combating this and be a movement for national and international change. In this way the Church will become a powerful influence to the wider world community.

Asylum issues

22. Asylum and the lessons of history mean that the present debate about asylum generally occurs against a background that presumes that liberal democracies have a long and honourable tradition of granting asylum, and that this generous and discretionary act has, over the last ten to fifteen years, been increasingly exploited by those who are not entitled to the protection of asylum. Yet, in fact, asylum predates liberal democracies by millennia, and states' asylum practices have always reflected their own interests and, only incidentally benefited individuals. Let us not forget that asylum seekers in the UK are often highly skilled and therefore help the economic growth. They are a bonus not “bogus”.

23. The story of the Tampa, a Norwegian container ship, which rescued four hundred asylum seekers from a sinking boat off the Indonesian archipelago in the first week of September 2001, is part of an unfolding global story of the West's reaction to people seeking refuge. The Australian government refused the ship permission to land and armed troops boarded the ship and forcibly moved it out of Australian waters. In the following week, the Australian parliament rushed through unprecedented measures to keep out asylum seekers, measures which were strikingly similar to those proposed by the British Government the following May.

24. Public opinion surrounding the reality of asylum seekers and refugees is largely formed through the media. The language of ‘flooding’ ‘dumping’ and ‘sponging’ and the generic criminalisation of this group

through tabloid - and some broadsheet- journalism cannot be separated from the increasing levels of verbal and physical attacks upon asylum seekers, or those assumed to be asylum seekers.

25. The responses of some governments and some local authorities to asylum seekers have been of concern to Churches and other civil rights organisations. Some communities have organised protests against housing asylum seekers in their community.

26. Current European governments' policies and legislation continue to be made harsher and are increasingly marked by less accountability, less transparency and more punitive. What is more worrying is the underlying ideology present, which uses Christian themes, language and symbols (as used by politicians and tabloid papers following the events of September 11, 2001) to justify racism and to promote polarisation of 'them' and 'us'.

27. Those seeking asylum are demonised as bogus, as illegal immigrants and as economic migrants scrounging at Britain's "capital" gate and threatening British culture. And it is this demonisation of the people that the capitalist western world seeks to exclude - in the name of the preservation of economic prosperity and national identity - that signals the emergence of a new racism and new violence against Black people and those perceived as from outside or not like 'us'.

Disorder and violence

28. In Britain the breakout of violence is not against the state but against neighbours. Welfare and means of survival no longer exist. In today's markets and privatisation, the weakest go to the wall and violence is bred. The Government has thus become part of the violence. This is a violence that destroys and not a redemptive one. Looking at this philosophically, for most Black and Asian people and the poor in Britain violence is not a matter of choice; rather it is a symptom that there are no choices. Their cry is "I can't get my child to school." "My home is a ghetto." "My parents are old and poor." How can we stop this violence? The Churches can play a part as they look at the needs of the deprived and become part of the process that rejects human abuse by denying them means of surviving, freedom of movement and human rights.

29. The disturbances in the northern town of England in the summer of 2001 reflected deep-seated social problems. The Home Office Report on the disturbances described the situation as follows "The violent community disorder which erupted in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham during the summer of 2001 were some of the worst in twenty years. There was less serious disorder in a number of places and many more towns mainly in the North, were identified by the police as being at significant risk of serious disorder. There have been sporadic incidents of further community disorder since summer".

30. The same Home Office Report identified the following features, which to a greater or lesser extent, all the disturbances shared:

- All the wards affected were amongst the 20 per cent most deprived in the country and parts of Burnley and Oldham rank in the most deprived one per cent.

- All have average incomes, which are amongst the lowest in the country and many areas involved have low educational attainment standards in schools.
- The participants were overwhelmingly young men (both Black and White) and those arrested were predominantly between 17-26 years old.

31. The disturbances occurred in areas, which had become fractured on racial, generational, cultural and religious lines, where there was little dialogue or not much contact between the various groups and across those social divides. In many but not all cases, trouble arose after months of racial tension and widely reported racial attacks by both Asian and White groups.

32. The far-right organisations had been active in some, but not all areas, although rumours of far-right activity were reported by the police to have raised tension in other areas. However, the arrest or failure to arrest certain individuals, assaults and other criminal activities often played a part in spreading disturbances.

33. These features would suggest that the Church's response to racism needs to be targeted more precisely and based on an analysis, which includes specific situation of different ethnic groups, age, gender and social class.

XENO-RACISM

'It is a racism that is not just directed at those with darker skins from the former colonial territories, but at the newer categories of the displaced, the dispossessed and the uprooted, who are beating at western Europe's doors - the Europe that helped to displace them in the first place. It is a racism, that is, that cannot be colour-coded, directed as it is at poor whites as well, and is therefore passed off as xenophobia, a "natural" fear of strangers. This racism also denigrates and humiliates people before segregating and/or expelling them. It is a xenophobia that bears all the marks of the old racism. It is racism in substance, but "xeno" in form. It is a racism that is meted out to impoverished strangers even if they are white. It is xeno-racism'.

Dr A Sivanandan, Director, Institute of Race Relations, London

Media

34. The continuing stereotyping of black people in the press - as for example criminals or drug users - affirms in however subtle a way the acceptability of racist jokes and discriminatory employment practices. The newspapers we read have a strong influence on our thinking and behaviour, yet this issue is rarely embraced as one of Christian responsibility. The newspapers we read is an issue of racial justice! The values we teach at home are issues of racial justice! The stand we take to societal norms is an issue of racial justice!

Religion and theology

35. It is undeniable that throughout history and in many cases even today, Christianity has frequently been associated with western culture, western culture with capitalism, and capitalism with oppression. The Methodist church should vigorously challenge any theology that tries to limit and disfigure the Christian message in this way.

36. How have our religious faith and practice responded to the reality of Britain's present multicultural society? Have they led to a sense of isolation and oppression felt by people of other faiths or ethnic groups? We need to face these questions honestly, whilst still holding fast to the liberating story of the risen Christ.

Civil liberties

37. The war in Afghanistan, the extension of the war against terrorism, the proposal to extend it to Iraq and other countries believed to have stockpiled weapons of mass destruction has, alongside greater US deployment of troops across the globe, clearly fashioned a new world order dominated by one super-power the USA. But what is less clear is the way the new world order and the war against terrorism will shape the very foundations of European political culture.

38. Some argue that shifts have occurred within political culture of Europe as a direct result of September 11. In Britain the effects of new anti-terrorist measures, in terms of the erosion of democracy, the denial of civil liberties and the removal of refugee protection are a concern for us. Could this be the signal that Britain is moving into a new political epoch in which a trade-off between freedom and security will lead to a fundamental change in the nature of state power and the emergence of "The Security State"?

39. European, including Britain, anti-terrorist laws adopted post September 11, breed a culture of suspicion against Black people, Muslims and people of Middle-Eastern appearance, who are increasingly treated in the same way as were "enemy aliens" during World War One and Two.

40. The sudden increase in 2002 of Black people being stopped far more than white people under 'Stop and Search' adds a new layer to the racism and suspicion as foreigners, asylum seekers are demonised. Are we entering a new era in domestic race policy, where old, discredited ideas of monoculturalism and assimilation into the dominant white, European, Christian culture are once again in the ascendant? Some say that the hidden cost of September 11 in this respect is an unashamed racism.

The Far Right

41. Britain's racism continues to mutate. Some governments' policies seem to give justification to popular racism. Institutional racism is often misinterpreted because its definition includes intention and measurable objectives. A closer look at what has happened elsewhere in Europe may help illuminate this point.

42. From Jean Marie Le Pen's stunning success in the first round of the French presidential election to the high percentage vote cast for the party of the murdered populist Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands, we have witnessed the resurgence of Europe's extreme-Right and anti-immigration parties. These do not

have a long history but have a populist message. European States' racism is influenced by these far-right parties e.g. in Denmark the far-right mantra is anti-Muslim, anti-migration and hard line policies. The Netherlands and Norway are not very different from the other European countries.

43. Among European mainstream political parties two schools of thought have emerged on how best to counter this threat. One dominated by the British Prime Minister Tony Blair and the Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar, the other by the German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder. For the Blair/Aznar axis, the extreme-Right can only be countered by tackling its electoral themes head on and, in the words of Aznar, “making immigration a central electoral issue”. But Chancellor Schroeder puts a different view and argues that it is dangerous to appease and accommodate extreme-Right views.

44. However the questions we need to ask about these far-right groups' views are: Who is correct and where does the truth lie? If these extreme-Right, anti-immigrant views are accommodated, who benefits?

45. According to the British Institute of Race Relations researchers, the argument that the far Right can be countered by making immigration a central electoral issue is to turn reality on its head. They looked at the way immigration was treated in recent election campaigns in France, the Netherlands, Portugal and Ireland, and reviewed the start of electoral campaigning in the run-up to elections in Sweden and Germany. A close look at the facts demonstrated that:

* There is a direct correlation between the high percentage of the vote gained by the extreme-Right and the extent to which mainstream parties prioritise immigration as a central electoral issue.

* Once politicians prioritise immigration as an election issue, the media is given the green light to sensationalise the matter, linking it to crime and hysteria.

* Although the extreme-Right gains from an increasingly hysterical debate, the ultimate winners are the centre-Right parties, which pose as tough on immigration and crime while incorporating a watered-down version of the extreme-Right's racist rhetoric.

* Where mainstream political parties do not distort the immigration issue, the extreme-Right and anti-immigrant parties fail to register electorally.

SECTION IV: RECOMMENDATIONS

Arm me with jealous care, as in thy sight to live; And O thy servant, Lord, prepare a strict account to give! *Verse 3 of “A Charge To Keep I Have”, Charles Wesley (1707 - 1788)*

46. The CRJ recommends that the Methodist Church affirm its calling “to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission” recognising that the Church exists to:

- ‘increase awareness of God's presence and to celebrate God's love (Worship)

- 'help people to grow and learn as Christians, through mutual support and care' (Learning and Caring)
- 'be a good neighbour to people in need and challenge injustice' (Service)
- 'make more followers of Jesus Christ' (Evangelism)

47. The action we take to promote racial justice should include:

- identifying and eliminating unlawful discrimination both direct and indirect
- addressing and removing institutional racism and racialised practices
- promoting equality of opportunity and treatment and working towards the goal of full equality of outcome.
- promoting good race relations between members of different ethnic, cultural and religious groups and communities.

48. Personal witness and action

(a) Speak out against racism in discussions with family, groups, at work, in public places, in church, the media and also include racial justice concerns in personal prayer and devotional life.

(a) Show concern and act upon direct and indirect racial discrimination and injustice in all its forms, e.g. education, employment and housing.

(a) Set out a strategy for engaging with all churches to share good practice in relation to racial justice and ensure that race equality is incorporated in all aspects of church life and work.

(a) Refuse to laugh at racist jokes, making one's displeasure visible; take action to make it clear that one finds such jokes unacceptable, e.g. walk out, complain to management or organisers of shows.

(a) Show your support for Black and Asian people facing discrimination and/or harassment at work, school and in the community, including taking up the matter with teachers, colleagues and people in authority.

(a) Read newspapers, books and other literature written by minority ethnic persons.

(a) Spread knowledge about the achievements of Black and Asian people. Join or set up informal groups with others who want to increase their knowledge of and participation in Black empowerment and racial justice activities.

49. Structures and Strategies

The Methodist Church needs to strengthen mechanisms to 'mainstream' racial justice in its committees, other groups and structures, for example:

(a) Set in motion strategies for enabling the church to understand the compounding impact of multiple oppressions which come with racial injustice, i.e. poverty, want, isolation, physical assault, harassment and exclusion.

(a) Develop peer-counselling structures (including some organised in racial identity groups) for Black and White persons involved in racial justice issues. This may include White ministers in multi-cultural churches, Black and Asian ministers and Local Preachers, Black and Asian representatives to District and Connexional structures, monitoring the Church Ministerial Services to ensure that Black, Asian and White counsellors trained in cross-cultural counselling are available.

(a) Work with Committees and groups to set specific, measurable targets and a timeframe for implementation and evaluation of targets to end racial discrimination in all its forms.

(a) Monitor and reflect on the implications of current population trends indicating that dual heritage persons constitute the fastest growing section of the minority ethnic population of Britain. Initiate programmes and activities to make this section of the population part of a truly 'inclusive' society.

(a) Publish annual Racial Justice Newsletter with stories from Districts, general articles on racism/racial justice issues, reviews and other information regarding current resources for Racial Justice Sunday, observance of Black History Month, etc. This could perhaps be a supplement included in The Methodist Recorder annually.

(a) Identify specific training programmes, (for example more advance racism awareness training, cross-cultural counselling for ministers and local preachers; recruitment and personnel strategies for persons in management and administrative roles) that would follow on from the basic racism awareness training available for many in the Methodist church.

(a) Use training materials and images which show Black and Asian people in biblical stories at Sunday school and in other activities where children are being taught Christian stories and values.

(a) Develop short pamphlets which use biblical stories to bring out racial justice issues, e.g. link plight of refugees to Joseph, Mary and Jesus having to run away to Egypt with his family, the story of the Good Samaritan and Joseph's brothers going to another country to seek food because of famine.

50. Participation, Representation and Monitoring

(a) Seek to address under-representation of Black and Asian people at the decision levels of church life and give voice to genuine concerns by listening to and acting upon these concerns. Be open to new ideas and new ways of doing things when suggestions come from Black and Asian people.

51. Young People

(a) Encourage MAYC and other relevant bodies to ensure that at least two young Black people are included in Youth Exchange Programmes, and that structures and training are in place to foster a

commitment to racial justice in young White Methodists and ensure appropriate participation of Black Methodists in all aspects of MAYC's work.

(a) Encourage exchanges between Black, Asian and White young people with countries from which Black and Asian people have historical roots and links and with countries with effective racial justice and Black Empowerment programmes, e.g. the USA

(a) Encourage participation in the Black Methodist Youth Conference from all young Black and Asian people in the connexion.

(a) Arrange regular training and networking activities on racial justice issues for Sunday school Teachers and Methodists who are teachers within the school system.

52. Wood-Sheppard Principles

(a) Promote the implementation and monitoring of the Wood-Sheppard principles in all Church employment policies and practices. See examples from the Churches Commission for Racial Justice (CCRJ) and Race Equality in Employment Programme (REEP).

53. Refugees and Asylum Seekers

(a) Develop personal relationships with people of ethnic groups different from your own, relating to them as fellow human beings on the same footing.

(a) Show concern for refugees and asylum seekers, set in place structures and start programmes that will assist the world church to address issues of racism in all areas of the church work and further afield.

54. Theological and Biblical Values

(a) Ensure that the current practices of the church conform to its beliefs in justice and identify what steps need to be taken to ensure that its objectives in combating racism are made known at all aspects of church life so that it can achieve its full potential in the fight against racism.

RESOLUTIONS

33/1 The Conference receives the Report of the Committee for Racial Justice

33/2 The Conference re-affirms its commitment to racial justice and adopts the Recommendations in paragraphs 46 and 47.

Appendix

Population Size: 7.9% from a minority ethnic group

The size of the minority ethnic population was 4.6 million in 2001 or 7.9 per cent of the total population of the United Kingdom.

Indians were the largest minority group, followed by Pakistanis, those of mixed ethnic backgrounds, Black Caribbeans, Black Africans and Bangladeshis. The remaining minority ethnic groups each accounted for less than 0.5 per cent but together accounted for a further 1.4 per cent of the UK population.

Ethnic group data were not collected on the Northern Ireland Census in 1991. However, in Great Britain the minority ethnic population grew by 53 per cent between 1991 and 2001, from 3.0 million in 1991 to 4.6 million in 2001.

Half of the total minority ethnic population were Asians of Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi or other Asian origin. A quarter of minority ethnic people described themselves as Black, that is Black Caribbean, Black African or Other Black. Fifteen per cent of the minority ethnic population described their ethnic group as Mixed. About a third of this group were from White and Black Caribbean backgrounds.

Census Ethnic Group Questions: In both 1991 and 2001 respondents were asked to which ethnic group they considered themselves to belong. The question asked in 2001 was more extensive than that asked in 1991, so that people could tick "Mixed" for the first time. This change in answer categories may account for a small part of the observed increase in the minority ethnic population over the period.

Different versions of the ethnic group question were asked in England and Wales, in Scotland and in Northern Ireland, to reflect local differences in the requirement for information. However, results are comparable across the UK as a whole.

Regional Distribution: 45% of minority ethnic people live in London

In 2001 minority ethnic groups were more likely to live in England than in the other countries of the UK. In England, they made up 9 per cent of the total population compared with only 2 per cent in both Scotland and Wales and less than 1 per cent in Northern Ireland.

The minority ethnic populations were concentrated in the large urban centres. Nearly half (45 per cent) of the total minority ethnic population lived in the London region, where they comprised 29 per cent of all residents.

After London, the second largest proportion of the minority ethnic population lived in the West Midlands (with 13 per cent of the minority ethnic population), followed by the South East (8 per cent), the North West (8 per cent), and Yorkshire and the Humber (7 per cent).

The English regions which contained the smallest proportion of the minority ethnic population were the North East and the South West where they made up only 2 per cent of each region's population.

Seventy eight per cent of Black Africans and 61 percent of Black Caribbeans lived in London. More than half of the Bangladeshi group (54 per cent) also lived in London. Other ethnic minority groups were more dispersed. Only 19 per cent of Pakistanis resided in London, 21 per cent lived in the West Midlands, 20 per cent in Yorkshire and the Humber, and 16 per cent in the North West.

Sources: Census, April 2001, Office for National Statistics; Census, April 1991, Office for National Statistics.