

Measuring diversity in England's schools: a new web resource

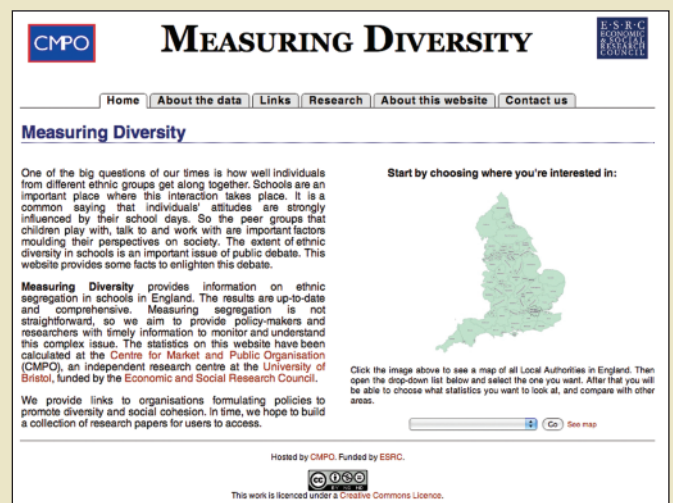
A new online resource from CMPO sheds light on ethnic segregation in England's schools. *Simon Burgess* introduces the website.

One of the biggest questions of our times is how well individuals from different ethnic groups get along together. Schools are an important place where this interaction takes place. It is a common saying that people's attitudes are strongly influenced by their school days. So the peer groups that children play with, talk to and work with are important factors moulding their perspectives on society.

The extent of ethnic diversity in schools is an important issue of public debate. Our new website – www.measuringdiversity.org.uk – tries to enlighten this debate by providing up-to-date and comprehensive information on ethnic segregation in schools in England. Users will also be able to follow trends over the past seven years, up to 2008, the most recently available data.

For example, the website shows that:

- One in eight (13%) secondary school pupils in Manchester are of Pakistani ethnicity. Fewer than one in a hundred (1%) of these pupils attend schools that have mostly white pupils, while over half (55%) attend schools that are mostly non-white. At the same time, segregation of pupils of Pakistani ethnicity in Manchester has been falling over the last seven years, 2002 to 2008.
- Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils in Oldham account for around 30% of the primary school population. Around 80% of both Pakistani and Bangladeshi primary school pupils are in schools that are mostly non-white and this proportion has remained roughly constant over time. The 'dissimilarity index of segregation' for Oldham is very high at around 0.8 for all ethnic groups: this means that 80% of pupils would have to change schools to achieve the same distribution of pupils in schools to that of the local authority.
- The most segregated ethnic group in Camden are Bangladeshi pupils. Three quarters (76%) of Bangladeshi primary school pupils attend schools that have mostly non-white pupils, compared with just under half (49%) of Black African pupils and one in six (17%) white pupils.



- The percentage of white pupils at primary schools in Wolverhampton has gradually decreased from 69% in 2002 to 57% in 2008, although the level of segregation has remained roughly constant.

Measuring segregation is not straightforward, so the aim is to provide policy-makers and researchers with timely information to monitor and understand this complex issue. Users of the website start by picking a local authority from a map or a list, and choosing what statistics to view. Results are presented for the most numerous individual ethnic groups across England. The available statistics include different measures of the ethnic composition of schools and different measures of segregation.

All of the statistics are fully explained in plain English. Users of the website can choose between viewing details for an individual year or trends over time. Users can also pick another area to compare with their chosen local authority, and can choose to make the comparison for all or just selected ethnic groups. Tables and graphs are downloadable.

The website – www.measuringdiversity.org.uk – was launched in January 2010. It was created by Simon Burgess, Ellen Greaves and Simon Speight.