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Diversity, trust and community participation in England

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This Findings uses data from the 2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey to explore levels of trust and community participation. It looks at whether there is a relationship between how diverse an area is in terms of socio-economic and ethnic groups and the levels of trust between neighbours and in relation to institutions such as the police, Parliament, the courts and the local council in that area. It also examines the relationship between this diversity and community participation. Both trust and participation are important markers of social capital and key elements of the Home Secretary's Civil Renewal agenda. The 2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey is the second in a series of biennial surveys. It asks questions about an individual's community participation, perceptions of racial discrimination and community cohesion, perceptions of his/her neighbourhood and what interviewees believe to be their rights and responsibilities as British citizens. A nationally representative sample of 9,486 people in England and Wales was interviewed, together with an additional sample of 4,571 people from minority ethnic groups. The results discussed here relate to data for England only.

Key points

- There is no statistically significant relationship (significant at the 0.05 level) between either measure of diversity (socio-economic and ethnic groups) and an individual's trust in the courts, in Parliament, in the local council, in the police and in their employer.
- There is no significant relationship between either measure of diversity and civic participation or formal volunteering.
- However, the more ethnically diverse an area is, the less likely people are to trust others within that area.
- Certain independent socio-demographic variables (including religion, educational attainment and household size) showed a consistent relationship with trust and participation. Other variables (including sex, age and ethnicity) showed more varied associations.

Relationships between diversity, trust and civic participation are currently the subject of much political debate (Goodhart, 2004). Findings from research in the US are discussed below but there is little research investigating this relationship in the UK context. Recent research using the British Household Panel Survey published by MORI showed that people who live in areas of greater ethnic or social diversity report lower levels of satisfaction with their local council, health and housing services (Duffy, 2004). However, the same relationship does not hold for generalised trust.

Duffy acknowledges that more and better data are needed to unpick the relative importance of levels of diversity, deprivation and population mobility. The results reported here help to build this evidence base. They are from an analysis of the 2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey (due to differences in the measurement of the Index of Deprivation across England and Wales, these findings only use data for England).

The key questions asked were:

- are relatively high levels of diversity in terms of ethnic and socio-economic groups associated with low levels of trust and community participation in England?
- what are the key socio-demographic variables shaping trust and community participation?

Logistic regression modelling was used to analyse these questions. This models the probability of an individual expressing a particular type of trust or being involved in community participation.

Some of the main socio-demographic variables, including deprivation, were controlled for, but this model did not control for population mobility. Six measures of trust and two measures of active community participation were used as outcome variables.

The eight measures used as outcome variables:

- trust of others in their neighbourhood (generalised trust)
- trust in the police
- trust in the courts
- trust in their employer
- trust in Parliament
- trust in the local council
- civic engagement
- formal volunteering.

Civic engagement includes activities such as signing a petition, contacting a local councillor or public official working for a local council, attending a public meeting or rally, or contacting an MP. Formal volunteering is defined as having given unpaid help through groups, clubs or organisations to benefit other people or the environment once in the last 12 months. For details on the methodology see the Methodological note.

These findings show that there is no simple relationship between diversity, levels of trust and community participation. Ethnic diversity in an area only had a significant impact upon one of the eight measures – trust of others in their neighbourhood (generalised trust). Socio-economic diversity was not a significant explanatory variable for any of these measures.

These results from the 2003 Citizenship Survey are in contrast to those found in the US. A recent review of US papers suggested that the more homogeneous an area is in America, the higher its trust level is likely to be (Costa and Kahn, 2003). Costa and Kahn found there were higher levels of social interaction amongst people who shared interests and particularly amongst members of the same ethnic group when facing discrimination. They also found that areas of higher diversity experienced lower levels of trust and volunteering. This supports Putnam's work in the US – he

argues that areas displaying higher levels of ethnic and social diversity will display lower levels of social capital over a wide range of indicators, including trust and civic engagement (quoted in Saguaro Seminar, 2001; also cited in *The Economist*, 2004).

Results for diversity and trust and active community participation

Diversity and trust

Table 1 shows the results of the regression analysis in the form of odds ratios. Contrary to the US based work (Saguaro Seminar, 2001), the ethnic diversity of an area showed no significant relationship with the majority of social capital indicators: trust in the police, courts, Parliament, local council or in their employer. However, it showed that people living in areas of high ethnic diversity had significantly lower levels of generalised trust (trust of others in their neighbourhood).

Odds ratio

An odds ratio greater than one means that this group is more likely to express trust or participate in civic activities than the reference group.

Similarly, the data showed that there was no statistically significant relationship between socio-economic diversity and all the measures of trust.

Diversity and active community participation

Neither ethnic nor socio-economic diversity showed any significant relationship with levels of civic participation or formal volunteering.

Socio-demographic variables shaping trust and community participation

Table 1 shows the modelling results for a wide range of socio-demographic and sample design variables. This section reports the most interesting findings. Certain independent variables (including religion, educational attainment and household size) showed a consistent relationship with the outcome variables (trust, formal volunteering, civic participation). Other variables (including sex, age and ethnicity) showed more varied associations across the outcome variables.

Religion

People who follow a religion were significantly more likely to be trustful or to formally volunteer. However, it was only those who follow the Muslim faith who were significantly more likely to report generalised trust or to participate in civic activities.

Table 1 Results of the modelling exercise: listing odds ratios for variables where there is a statistically significant relationship

Socio-demographic variables	Generalised trust	Trust in employer	Trust in police	Trust in local council	Trust in courts	Trust in Parliament	Formal volunteering	Civic participation
Diversity								
Ethnic diversity	0.44	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Social diversity	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Sex								
Male (reference group)								
Female	–	1.40	1.16	–	–	–	–	–
Age								
16–24 years (reference group)								
25–34 years	*	–	1.45	–	–	–	–	*
35–49 years	1.53	–	1.51	–	–	–	–	*
50+ years	2.57	–	1.45	–	–	–	–	1.66
Ethnicity								
White (reference group)								
Mixed	*	0.67	0.60	*	0.60	*	0.70	*
Asian	*	*	*	1.77	1.28	1.70	0.56	*
Black	*	0.54	0.45	1.40	0.61	1.47	0.77	0.58
Chinese/other	0.65	*	*	1.98	*	2.05	0.41	*
Religion								
No religion (reference group)								
Christian	*	*	1.34	1.20	1.18	1.21	2.66	*
Muslim	1.84	1.46	1.22	1.50	1.40	*	1.78	2.04
Other	*	1.55	1.32	*	1.29	1.43	2.45	*
Education								
Degree	1.72	–	1.32	*	1.56	1.77	2.14	2.19
GCSE/A Level/other	1.23	–	1.16	*	*	1.25	1.75	1.89
No qualifications (reference group)								
Missing/don't know	1.65	–	1.35	1.62	*	1.51	*	1.56
National Statistics Socio-economic Classification								
Managerial and professional	1.74	*	*	0.56	*	0.62	1.70	–
Intermediate	1.49	*	*	0.60	0.79	0.57	1.50	–
Small employer and lower supervisory	*	*	0.67	0.52	0.63	0.59	1.26	–
Routine	*	*	0.80	0.62	0.76	0.62	*	–
Student	*	–	*	*	*	*	1.68	–
Not working (reference group)								
Missing/don't know	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	–
Limiting long-term illness								
No (reference group)								
Yes	0.73	0.75	0.76	–	0.78	–	–	–
Proportion of friends from same ethnic group								
All the same (reference group)								
More than half	–	–	–	–	–	–	1.33	*
Around half	–	–	–	–	–	–	1.33	1.54
Less than half	–	–	–	–	–	–	1.45	1.65
No friends	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.30	0.20
Don't know	–	–	–	–	–	–	*	*

Notes:

* No statistically significant relationship at the 0.05 level.

– Variable was excluded from the model.

Reference group is the variable to which all the other categories of the same variable should be compared. This would have an odds ratio of 1. Logistic regression provides a measure of how each of the dependent variables is related to the independent variables. If an odds ratio is less than 1, it means there is a negative relationship between the two variables: as one goes up, the other goes down. An odds ratio greater than 1 means there is a positive relationship between the two variables: as one rises, so will the other. Very large odds ratios indicate that the relationship is strongly positive. Very small odds ratios indicate the relationship is strongly negative.

Table 1 Continued

Socio-demographic variables	Generalised trust	Trust in employer	Trust in police	Trust in local council	Trust in courts	Trust in Parliament	Formal volunteering	Civic participation
Proportion of friends with similar education								
All the same (reference group)								
More than half	*	–	*	*	1.16	–	1.36	*
Around half	*	–	*	*	*	–	1.31	*
Less than half	0.71	–	0.76	0.79	0.75	–	1.16	*
No friends	*	–	*	*	0.60	–	*	3.71
Don't know	*	–	0.69	0.61	*	–	*	0.38
Proportion of neighbours from same ethnic group								
All the same (reference group)								
More than half	–	–	–	–	–	–	1.13	–
Around half	–	–	–	–	–	–	*	–
Less than half	–	–	–	–	–	–	*	–
Don't know	–	–	–	–	–	–	*	–
Index of Multiple Deprivation								
1 least deprived (reference)								
2	–	–	–	*	–	–	–	–
3	–	–	–	*	–	–	–	–
4	–	–	–	*	–	–	–	–
5	–	–	–	*	–	–	–	–
6	–	–	–	*	–	–	–	–
7	–	–	–	0.71	–	–	–	–
8	–	–	–	*	–	–	–	–
9	–	–	–	0.74	–	–	–	–
10 most deprived	–	–	–	0.67	–	–	–	–
Sample design variables								
Household size	1.07	–	1.10	–	1.06	1.09	1.07	–
Household type								
1 adult aged 16–59 (reference)								
2 adults aged 16–59	–	*	*	–	–	–	*	–
Adults + children 0–4	–	*	*	–	–	–	0.78	–
Adults + children 5–15	–	*	*	–	–	–	*	–
3 adults, no children	–	*	*	–	–	–	*	–
2 adults, 1 or both 60+	–	1.85	*	–	–	–	1.23	–
1 adult aged 60+	–	2.14	1.43	–	–	–	*	–
Government office region								
NE/NW/Merseyside (reference)								
Midlands	*	1.31	–	–	–	–	–	–
Eastern	0.62	*	–	–	–	–	–	–
SE/SW/London	*	*	–	–	–	–	–	–
Wales	–	*	–	–	–	–	–	–
Population density								
1 (reference group)								
2	*	–	*	*	–	–	*	–
3	*	–	*	*	–	–	0.62	–
4	*	–	*	*	–	–	0.60	–
5	0.36	–	*	0.62	–	–	0.58	–
6	*	–	*	0.61	–	–	0.59	–
7	0.33	–	*	0.60	–	–	0.56	–
8	0.28	–	*	0.64	–	–	0.55	–
9	0.32	–	*	0.66	–	–	0.48	–
10 (highest)	0.35	–	*	0.67	–	–	0.54	–
Acorn								
Thriving	3.91	–	1.28	–	–	–	–	*
Expanding	3.61	–	*	–	–	–	–	0.38
Rising	2.12	–	*	–	–	–	–	*
Settling	2.13	–	*	–	–	–	–	*
Aspiring	*	–	*	–	–	–	–	*
Striving (reference group)								

Highest educational attainment

Having qualifications was strongly related to levels of trust and civic participation in all but two of the models (trust in their employer and in the local council). People with qualifications had higher levels of trust and were more likely to participate in civic activities than those with no qualifications. Similarly, the likelihood of showing increased trust and participation rose with levels of educational attainment. Those with a degree were more likely to have higher levels of trust and participation than those who had GCSEs/A-levels.

National Statistics Socio-economic Classification

People in the higher socio-economic groups were more likely to have generalised trust compared with those who were not working. However this relationship is not evident for lower socio-economic groups. Conversely, people in the managerial and professional, intermediate, small employer and lower supervisory and routine occupations were less likely to trust Parliament and the local council. The lower socio-economic groups were also less likely to trust the police and courts. The majority of those who worked (with the exception of those in routine jobs) had higher levels of formal volunteering than those who did not work. However, there was no relationship between socio-economic group and trust in their employer or civic participation.

Limiting long-term illness

Having a long-term illness or disability was associated with lower levels of generalised trust, trust in the courts, the police and in employers.

Sex

Women had a greater probability than men of reporting trust in their employer or in the police.

Age

Older people were more likely to have higher levels of generalised trust and trust in the police compared with 16- to 24-year-olds. People aged 50 and over were also significantly more likely to participate in civic activities.

Ethnicity

The relationships between ethnicity, trust and participation differed across the outcome variables. Levels of formal volunteering were significantly lower among people from all of the minority ethnic groups, while civic participation was only lower amongst black people. Similarly, early indications from the main 2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey suggest that informal volunteering may be higher among people from minority ethnic groups (Green et al., 2004).

In terms of trust, generalised trust was lower amongst people from the Chinese/other group, while trust in their employer, in the police and in the courts was lower for mixed race and

black people. Conversely, people from most of the minority ethnic groups had significantly higher levels of trust in the local council and Parliament, and Asian people were more likely to trust the courts than white people.

Proportion of friends from the same ethnic group

Having friends from different ethnic groups was associated with higher levels of formal volunteering and civic participation. Having no friends at all was associated with a decreased likelihood of undertaking either of these.

Proportion of friends with similar education

The educational attainment of a person's friends was significantly related to their levels of trust. Those who had more friends with different levels of educational attainment had lower levels of generalised trust, trust in the courts, the police and in the local council. However they were more likely to formally volunteer.

Index of multiple deprivation

More deprived areas were associated with lower levels of trust in the local council.

Population density

Areas of higher population density tended to display lower levels of generalised trust and trust in the local council. They also tended to have less formal volunteering.

ACORN group

An area's ACORN group was an important factor associated with generalised trust (see Methodological note for definition of ACORN groups). Those in higher ACORN groups tended to report considerably higher levels of generalised trust compared with those living in the lowest ACORN group (which typically identifies older people, council estate residents and less prosperous areas). Similarly, those living in the highest ACORN group showed greater levels of trust in the police.

Conclusion

Contrary to the relationship between diversity and social capital posited in the US, the analysis of the 2003 Citizenship Survey shows that this relationship does not hold for the majority of indicators of social capital used in the English context. Ethnic diversity was only significantly related to generalised trust, while socio-economic diversity was not significantly related to any of the measures of social capital.

Certain independent socio-demographic variables (including religion, educational attainment and household size) showed a consistent relationship with trust and participation. Other variables (including sex, age and ethnicity) showed more varied associations.

Methodological note

The data analysed were taken from the 2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey (for the main report see Green et al., 2004). A nationally representative sample of 9,486 people in England and Wales were interviewed, together with an additional sample of 4,571 people from minority ethnic groups. The data were used to monitor progress against the Home Office's Public Service Agreements 8 and 9. Because of differences in the measurement of the Index of Deprivation across England and Wales, this report only uses the data for England.

The variables were analysed using a backward selection logistic regression model. Various socio-demographic and sample design variables were controlled for. The modelling was undertaken in two stages. In the first stage deprivation was not included as an explanatory variable. In this model higher levels of social diversity were seen to produce significantly lower levels of trust in the local council. From this it can be concluded that social diversity has a weaker relationship with trust in the council, compared with deprivation. The measures of diversity were calculated at ward level using the Herfindahl Index. The value of this index increases when an area is dominated by one group – in this case it was either a particular ethnic or socio-economic group – and as such tends to be less diverse. The Herfindahl Index has traditionally been used as an economic indicator to show the concentration of different companies within a market sector. It has subsequently been used to measure the relative dominance of different ethnic groups within an area.

Ethnic diversity was calculated using the five harmonised ethnic group classifications: white, mixed race, black, Asian and Chinese/other. The socio-economic diversity index was calculated using seven National Statistics Socio-economic Classification groups (managerial and professional, intermediate, small employer/lower supervisory, routine workers, student, not working and other).

Differences discussed in the text are significantly different at the 0.05 level of significance unless otherwise stated.

During 2002/2003 the Office for National Statistics produced a set of harmonised questions to be used in surveys about social capital, see: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/socialcapital>

ACORN – 'A Classification of Residential Neighbourhoods', produced by CACI Ltd, classifies households according to the demographic, employment and housing characteristics of the surrounding neighbourhood. The classification consists of 55 area types. These can be collapsed into six top level categories used in this study.

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