

# Religiously mixed marriages in England and Wales

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# Motivation and surprising finding

- Ethno-religious intermarriage is regarded as the most complete form of social integration.
- Its frequency is therefore of public interest.
- How prevalent are religiously mixed partnerships in England and Wales?
- Not very – and controlling for the size and educational success of minority groups, the frequency is declining.

# Data source and acknowledgements

- 2011 Census Microdata (Household sample)
- Accessed via the ONS Virtual Microdata Laboratory at Drummond Gate
- My thanks to the ONS, and in particular to the VML team and service desk

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## Issues for today

- The proportion of people in each religious group marrying into other groups.
- Differences by age, sex, ethnicity, country of birth, education.
- Differences by local authority district.
- The religious identities ascribed to children whose parents are from different religious groups.

## Issues for another day

- The association between the prevalence of mixed marriage and other characteristics of the district (e.g. religious composition, deprivation).
- Changes between 2001 and 2011

# Three types of integration

- Structural: Equality of access to education, employment, services, housing, etc.
- Cultural: Shared norms, values, culture, etc.
- Social: Social mixing and frequent interaction, in personal as well as impersonal relationships.

# Social distance

For example the Bogardus scale:

Would you accept [group] as ...

- close relatives by marriage
- my close personal friends
- neighbours on the same street
- co-workers in the same occupation
- citizens in my country
- non-citizen visitors in my country
- Would exclude from entry into my country



Alternatively can look at actual contact rather than reported tolerance, e.g.

- Diversity in everyday contacts (in shops, pubs/cafés, schools, at work, etc.)
- Diversity of connections at social gatherings
- Diversity within network of close friends
- Inter-marriage

# Is intermarriage a good indicator of integration?

- High for some groups that continue to be disadvantaged in many respects, e.g. black Caribbeans
- Low in some groups that arguably are well integrated, e.g. modern Orthodox Jews
- Social assimilation does not necessarily correspond to structural integration

# Religiously mixed marriage: problems of measurement

- Marriage to someone with a different religion may produce a change in affiliation:
  - Conversion to spouse's religion
  - Shift to 'no religion'
- Are we concerned with religious heritage / nominal identification or only with the practising faithful?
- Where partners were raised in different religions but one now has no religion, should the marriage count as mixed?

# Approach to classification

- ‘Nones’ = no religion or religion not stated
- The overwhelming majority of nones are of Christian heritage, and hence few marriages between nones and Christians involve a mix of religious cultures.
- We could ignore nones and only count combinations of different religions as ‘mixed’ – but that would exclude marriages we might want to consider (e.g. white none of Christian heritage with someone from an ethno-religious minority).

## Religiously mixed marriages include:

- Spouses have different religions (in 90% of cases, one of them is Christian).
- One spouse has no religion and the other is non-Christian and of different ethnicity.

## This definition omits:

- Marriages between white Christians and non-whites with no religion (who might have been raised in a non-Christian religion).
- But there are few such marriages, and it is difficult to be confident that the minority partner is in fact of non-Christian heritage.

# Census-related problems

- It is easy to identify and link the household reference person and spouse.
- It is surprisingly difficult to link spouses in concealed families.
- Such couples are not yet included. They are only 4% of the total; the individuals may be disproportionately from religious minorities, but the loss of mixed marriages is likely to be small.

# Census microdata: the household sample

- 10% sample
- 5.7 million individual records
- 2.3 million household reference persons
- 1.0 million spouses of HH reference persons
- But some tables of religiously mixed marriages still end up with values less than 10!



# Religion on the census

- Close to a third of census respondents have no religion or did not answer the question (which was voluntary).
- The remainder are labelled as Christian (59% of the total) or Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, or other.

# Basic descriptive statistics

- 31.4% of marriages include a no religion / NS partner
- Ignoring most partnerships involving nones, only 1.5% of marriages are religiously mixed.
- Religious homogamy is high among Christians, Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs.

# Frequency of religiously mixed marriage by gender and religion (%)

	men	women
Christian	0.6	0.8
Buddhist	22.1	27.9
Hindu	6.4	5.2
Jewish	16.6	12.2
Muslim	5.5	2.0
Sikh	6.0	5.6
Other religion	27.3	24.0

# Variation by other characteristics

Mixed marriage is higher for:

- Some ethnic groups (Indian higher than Pakistani and Bangladeshi; Arab highest of all)
- People born outside the UK
- Younger generations
- The more highly educated

# Geographical variation

- The 25 districts with the highest proportion of religiously mixed marriages are nearly all found in London.
- Somewhat surprisingly, both Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea are in the top 4.
- Some areas with very diverse populations (e.g. Tower Hamlets, Leicester, Bradford) have relatively low prevalence of mixed marriage.

# Children of religiously mixed marriages more likely to be classified as nones

Parents	% none
Both Christian	11
Both same non-Christian religion	4
Both no religion / not stated	94
One none, other some religion	49
One Christian, other some other religion	40
Different non-Christian religions	30

# Does it matter which parent has which religion?

In general transmission doesn't vary greatly by which parent is which religion, though there are a few exceptions (e.g. Jewish mother vs father).

# Does it matter which religions are involved?

- In Christian–Muslim pairings, more of the children are identified as Christian (33%) than Muslim (28%), though none wins out (39%).
- Christian/Hindu and Christian/Sikh are similar, with a slightly enhanced bias towards Christian and none.
- In Christian/Buddhist pairings, few children end up as Buddhists.



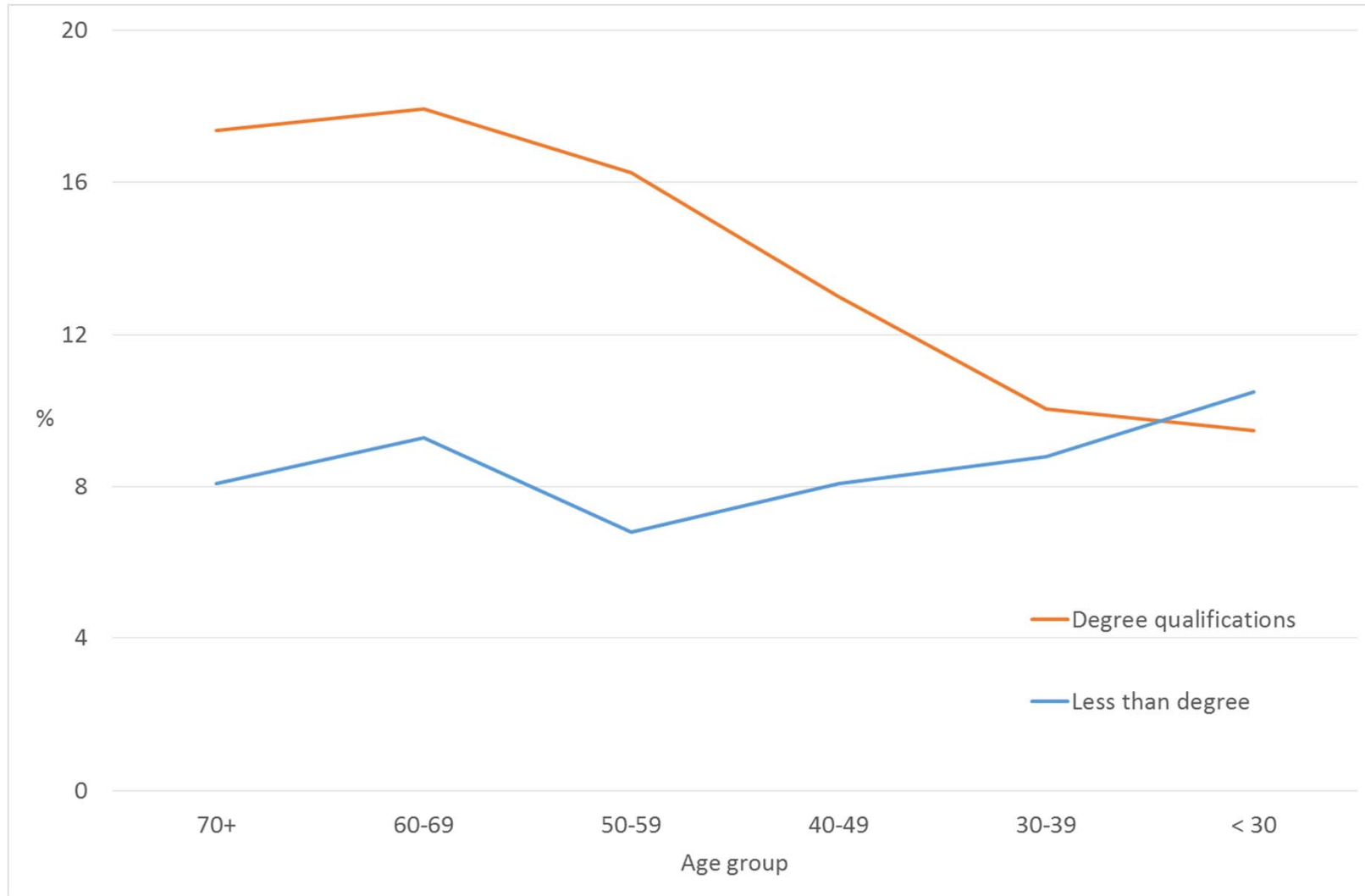
# Evidence on change: mixed marriages by generation are ...

- going up across the whole population
- staying steady among religious minorities
- declining among religious minority individuals with level 4+ qualifications

## And hence the story has three parts:

- Religiously mixed marriages are becoming more common, both in absolute numbers and as a proportion of all marriages.
- Relative to non-Christian numbers, however, the frequency of mixed marriage has not risen across the generations.
- For well educated members of religious minorities, the frequency of mixed marriage has halved.

# Religious minority men in mixed marriages, by qualifications (%)



## To put it another way ...

- The probability of being in an inter-faith marriage is strongly associated with education.
- Young adults are more likely to be well educated than their parents.
- Nevertheless, the relative frequency of mixed marriages has not risen across generations in religious minorities.
- Thus controlling for structural integration, the extent of social integration (at least as measured by intermarriage) has actually declined.

# Hypotheses

- Greater availability of co-religionist partners?
- Increased importance attached to religious identity?
- Tendency among educated young people of non-Christian heritage to identify as none if married to someone from a different group?
- Increasing inclination to cohabit rather than marry if partner has a different religion?