



MANCHESTER
CITY COUNCIL

Understanding populations, wider determinants and inequalities using 2021 Census data

The role of community insight and intelligence

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Why is the Census important?

- The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has shone a light on the inequalities in outcomes and opportunities that exist in society.
- The release of 2021 Census data has come at a time when there is unparalleled interest in understanding and addressing inequalities in health outcomes, equitable access to, and experiences of, health and other public services and the wider social and economic determinants of health and wellbeing.
- In Manchester, we are using the engagement networks and structures established during the pandemic, notably our community sounding boards, to help us interpret and make sense of the patterns emerging from the 2021 Census data and to co-produce the narrative that accompanies our local analysis.

Health Inequalities and the 2021 Census

- The Census is a key source of data when it comes to understanding inequalities at a local level. However, we can't rely on the Census alone and there is emerging evidence to suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic may have skewed the Census results.
- Local data indicates that the Census may have undercounted the population of Manchester by around 33,000 people (or 6%).
- Some of this reflects people who temporarily left during the pandemic, but have now returned to the city, and some of it reflects certain places or communities who didn't engage with the census. In addition, the population continues to grow and is in constant flux.
- This means that by relying on the census alone there is a risk of underestimating demand when planning universal services and of developing policies where certain groups have been misrepresented

What are Sounding Boards?

- Sounding Boards are a collection of community organisations and influencers who represent a particular community as a whole.
- In Manchester, a number of sounding boards were set up during the COVID-19 pandemic to represent our target groups. These are:
 - Black African and Caribbean
 - South Asian
 - Pakistani
 - Bangladeshi
 - Disabled People
 - Inclusion Health Groups
- All Sounding Boards are hosted by VCSE organisations

How do the Sounding Boards work?

- Sounding Boards have been set up to help the city address the needs of Communities that Experience Racial Inequality. Their role is to
 - Bring together a group of people that can act as a voice for their communities
 - Give the communities they represent a voice in the development and delivery of our programme of work around health equity
 - Identify and share what the priority issues and concerns are for the communities they represent
 - Share their views on how statutory sector initiatives and activities might inadvertently impact adversely on different communities and provide potential solutions
- The Sounding Boards are a forum to discuss ideas and proposed activities and to act as “critical friends”.

Sounding Boards and 2021 Census

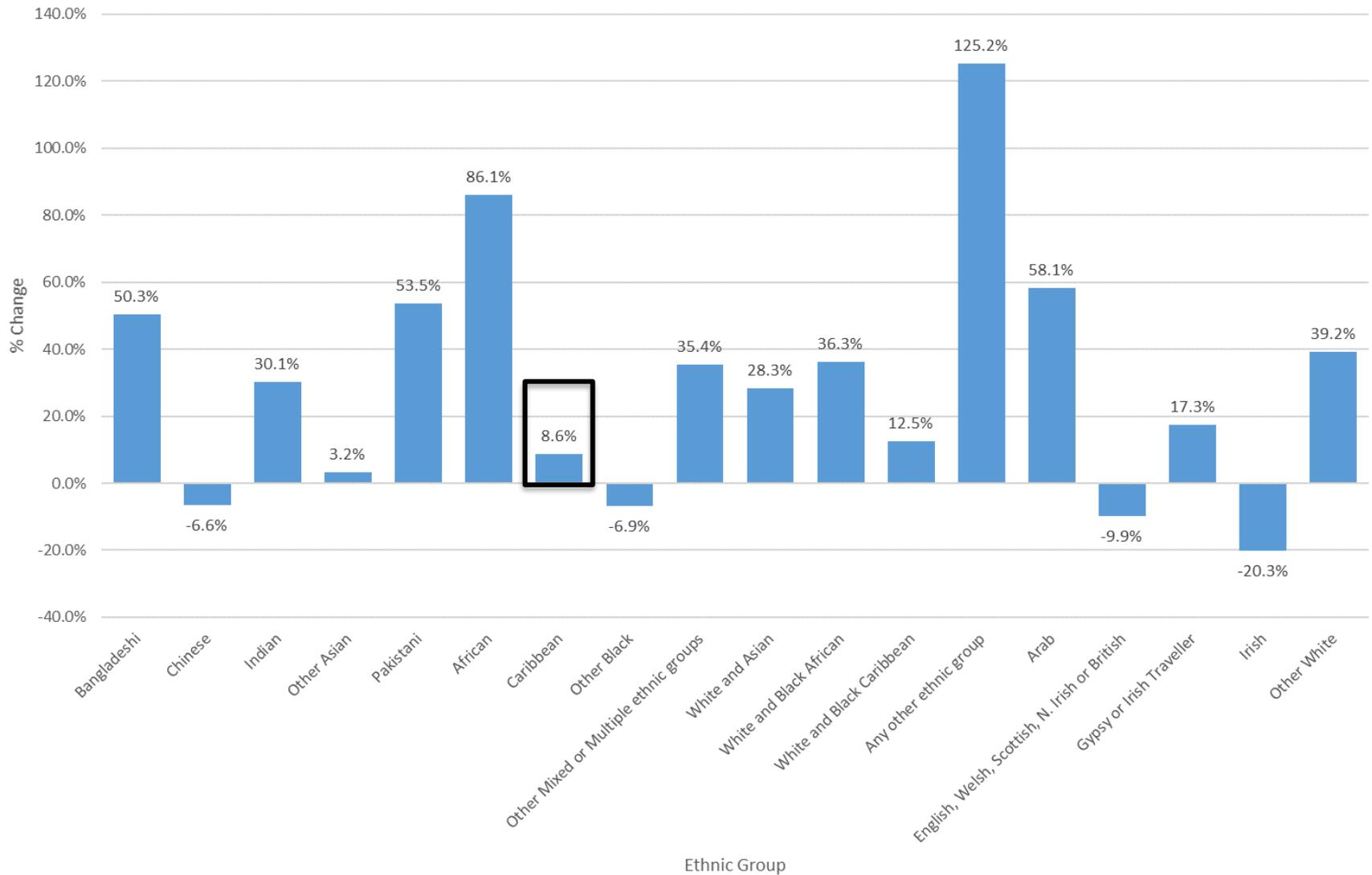
- The Sounding Boards and the communities they represent are a key source of local insight into the findings of 2021 Census and what it tells us about the population of Manchester.
- This sort of insight is different from – and of equal value to - the sorts of insight we ordinarily gain from information analysts, council officers, senior managers and elected members etc.
- Working with the Sounding Boards in this way is in line with the eight Inclusive Data Principles set out as part of the recommendations of the Inclusive Data Taskforce, which emphasised the importance of creating an environment of *trust and trustworthiness* between the subjects, producers and users of data and of the need to take a *collaborative whole system* approach to the collection, analysis and use of data and evidence.

Questions for Sounding Board members

- Based on your knowledge of your own community, are the patterns seen in the Census data those what you'd expect to see?
- What insight do you have about your communities' engagement with the Census? Which sections of your communities are most likely to be missing or under-represented in the data?
- What does the data so far tell us about how public services and VCSE organisations need to develop and respond to changes in the local population?

Example 1: Change in ethnic groups 2011 to 2021

- There is a vibrant and long established Caribbean community in Manchester, mainly centred on the Hulme, Moss Side and Whalley Range areas of the city.
- Data from 2021 Census suggests the number of people identifying with this ethnic group has only grown by 8.6% since the 2011 Census - an increase of just 830 people over this period.
- The scale of increase is lower than we might expect given the general pattern of increases in the proportion of residents identifying with other non-White British ethnic groups.
- Does this truly represent the full scale of the increase in the size of this ethnic group or are there other factors giving the impression of a lower than expected rate of increase in the size of this community?



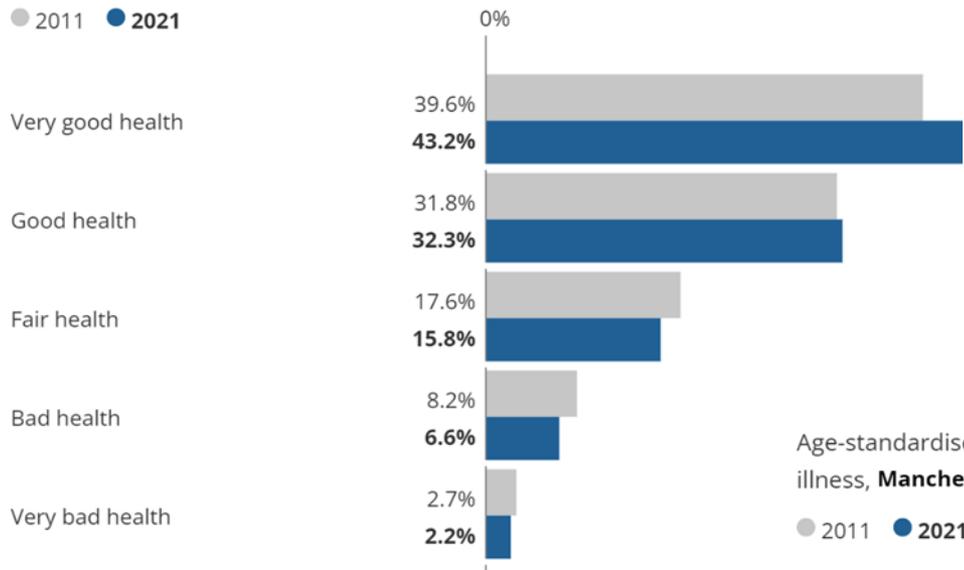
Change in ethnic groups 2011 to 2021: Explanations

- Natural ageing of the population linked to older age profile of this community (the 'Windrush generation')
- Higher rates of mortality (COVID and non-COVID) in this community during the pandemic resulting in a degree of mortality displacement (people dying sooner than would otherwise be expected)
- Changes in patterns of personal self-identity and reduced propensity for people – particularly younger people – to see their personal sense of belonging as being linked to their Caribbean heritage, reflected in the increase in people identifying with 'Other' ethnic groups.
- Reduction in the level of trust within this community linked to previous Windrush policies such that people were either less willing to respond to the Census or more cautious about identifying themselves as being from a Caribbean group (or both). **(Community feedback)**

Example 2: Health and Disability

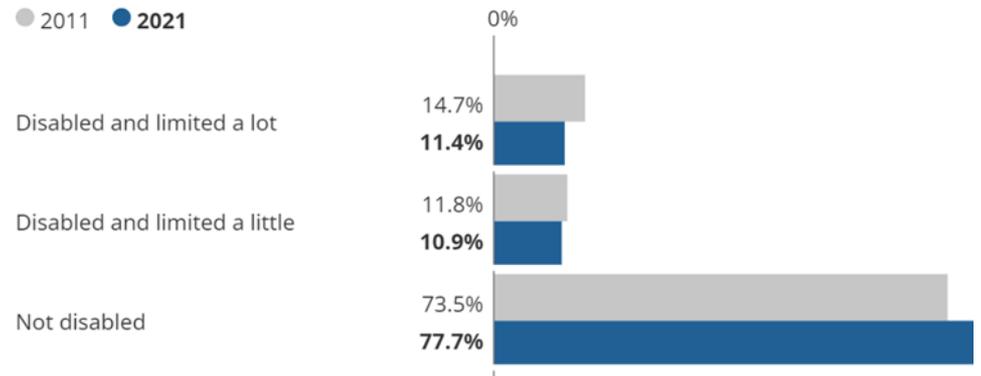
- The Census data suggests that people's health and levels of disability have improved between 2011 and 2021. This contradicts other evidence pointing to the negative impact of the pandemic on people's health and wellbeing.
- Does this reflect changes to the wording of the questions used in the 2011 and 2021 Census and the lack of comparability between the data for the two time periods or did living in the midst of a pandemic make people think differently about their own health status and affect their perception of what it means to have a long-term physical or mental health condition or illness?
- Did the timing of the Census and the fact that it was primarily digital-first make it harder for people in poorer health or with a disability to respond in the way they wished to?

Age-standardised proportion of usual residents by self-reported health, **Manchester**



Source: Office for National Statistics – 2011 Census and Census 2021

Age-standardised proportion of usual residents by long-term health condition or illness, **Manchester**



Source: Office for National Statistics – 2011 Census and Census 2021

Community Insights: Health and Disability

“I don’t think the figures will be right. Many neurodivergent people are tech-savvy, but many of us aren’t. Reading the Census questions without support would be difficult if it was not accessible.” (Autizma)

“It [the Census] was brilliant that it allowed people to self-identify, but it is indoctrinated in society that we use the medical model...People may not feel confident self-identifying because of this, especially around mental health. It’s fine for people to self-identify, but it questions whether people feel like they want to and accurately reflect themselves.” (MIND)

“There is a link between digital and poverty for people who are a disabled person or live with a disabled person. The pandemic could also have an effect on the uptake of the Census. They contrast with the ONS Health Index statistics. There is a disconnect between them.” (Manchester Disabled People’s Access Group)

“We know that lots of older people who are disabled people, but some don’t identify believing it is old age. There are more disabled people than the ONS figures reflect.” (Manchester Disabled People’s Access Group)

Conclusions and Key Learning

- Insights into the Census data obtained from local communities gives us an additional level of narrative over and above that provided by information analysts, council officers, senior managers and elected members etc.
- Working with communities in this way mirrors the recommendations of the Inclusive Data Taskforce and should now represent best practice for both central and local government
- As univariate and other tranches of Census data are released, we will be able to seek further insight from our local communities
- The 2021 Census provides a vehicle for building a culture of trust and trustworthiness between local communities and intelligence producers and for developing a collaborative whole system approach to the collection, analysis and use of data and evidence in a local area.