

Race bigotry falling in Britain

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Racial prejudice in Britain has been declining sharply in Britain since the 1980s thanks to the greater tolerance of younger generations - according to a new study.

Dr Rob Ford from The University of Manchester says that social contact with black or Asian Britons is becoming increasingly unremarkable to white people in their 20s and 30s.

The study published in next month's *British Journal of Sociology* found that while 60% of people born in the 1910s opposed marriage between white relatives and ethnic minorities, this figure falls to 25% for people born in the 1970s.

Opposition to working under a black boss also showed similar trends.

The sociologist based his findings on data from the British Social Attitudes surveys carried out in the 1980s and 1990s.

"The marked decline in racial prejudice is backed by further data points in 2006, 2004 and 2003 so the results here are pretty emphatic: we are becoming a more tolerant society,

"The attitudes of older cohorts reflect the fact that their perceptions were shaped by growing up in an ethnically homogeneous Britain before mass immigration began," he said.

"Those cohorts express much more hostility about social contact with

minority groups than their children and grandchildren."

He added: "But while prejudice is therefore likely to be less of a problem in the future, it is unlikely to disappear overnight.

"Cohort replacement is a slow process and significant levels of hostility to ethnic minorities remain even in the youngest cohorts surveyed here."

The study also found:

- Highly educated individuals express significantly less prejudice with prejudice levels among degree holders between 5 and 15 percentage points lower than among the unqualified.

- Working class communities are now starting to show more tolerant attitudes, although they lag behind more educated middle groups.

- The generational change in attitudes has been larger for women.

Women brought up in an ethnically homogenous Britain express more prejudice than men, while the youngest generations of women growing up in a more diverse social context have more rapidly adopted a tolerant view of ethnic minorities.

- British respondents did not express greater hostility towards Asian minority groups, despite their greater cultural and religious distinctiveness.

Dr Ford - who is based at the School of Social Sciences - attributes the changes to the decline in the legitimacy of various arguments for white superiority over the past fifty years, and the rise in social contact between white Britons and ethnic minorities

"It's also down to the virtual abandonment of views which reflect the anti-immigration line of Enoch Powell by the major political parties.

"Opinion leaders from across the political spectrum now accept and

celebrate ethnic diversity," he said.

"It's harder to argue nowadays that Britain's ethnic minority groups are not 'truly British' as white Britons see their black and Asian counterparts everyday on the television, in the newspapers and on the sports field.

"Direct social contact with ethnic minorities has also become a much more frequent occurrence as black and Asian communities have grown rapidly and have become more geographically dispersed within the UK."

Source: University of Manchester

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