

# Does where students grow up influence where they go to college?

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A new *Population, Space and Place* study explores how the ethnic composition of where students grow up is linked to where they attend university.

Using detailed administrative data on all 412,000 students attending university in the United Kingdom in 2014-2015 combined with spatial census data from 2011, investigators calculated a "diversity score" for every UK university, which was then compared with the ethnic diversity of the surrounding area. These scores allowed for an analysis of factors influencing whether students move towards more or less ethnically diverse universities than where they have grown up.

The researchers found that [white students](#) are more likely to move towards a university that is more diverse than their home neighbourhood, whereas ethnic minority students tend to stay at universities that have a similar level of diversity to where they have grown up. These contrasting tendencies may shed light on how race is experienced in contemporary university life.

"This research highlights the huge differences between UK universities in terms of the ethnic diversity of these universities. It shows how elite universities in [large cities](#) often do not reflect their ethnically diverse surroundings in their largely white [student](#) intake," said lead author Dr. Sol Gamsu, of the University of Bath. "This research also explores how the ethnic diversity of where students grow up is linked to the [ethnic diversity](#) of the university they attend." The paper forms part of a wider

programme of research funded by the Economic and Social Science Research Council (ESRC) led by Dr. Michael Donnelly from the University of Bath.

**More information:** Sol Gamsu et al, The spatial dynamics of race in the transition to university: Diverse cities and White campuses in U.K. higher education, *Population, Space and Place* (2018). [DOI: 10.1002/psp.2222](https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2222)

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