



CHANGING POPULATIONS

Researchers at the University of Birmingham are at the cutting edge of research into the emerging fields of superdiversity and ageing societies, tackling crucial issues such as health, security, identity, integration, and the opportunities that a superdiverse society offers to support economic recovery.

Key messages

- The Institute for Research into Superdiversity (IRIS) at the University of Birmingham is taking inspiration from its home in one of the UK's most diverse cities to study the impact and opportunities of the rapidly increasing range of nationalities, ethnicities, cultures, languages and faiths in our biggest cities.
- Birmingham is a pioneer in this field of research: IRIS is the first institute of its kind in the UK and one of the first globally to

focus on superdiversity, working to advance and promote expertise in the field.

- Researchers at the University are leading the way in new research into the impact of ageing among different groups; with one fifth of the population expected to be over 65 by 2020, understanding the ways in which different cultures experience ageing is vital to ensuring there is appropriate provision of services for older people and that interventions are effective across different cultures.

Background

- Birmingham is one of the most diverse cities in the UK, making it the ideal location to host a research institute into superdiversity and inspire its work.
- Superdiversity is a term coined to describe the rapidly increasing range of nationalities, ethnicities, cultures,

languages and more faiths represented by populations in our biggest cities. Meanwhile, terms such as 'race relations', 'integration' and 'multiculturalism' have come under scrutiny, accused of no longer providing adequate frames for studying contemporary societies and addressing the opportunities and challenges produced by the 'diversification of diversity'.

- By the year 2020, one fifth of the population will be over the age of 65 and there is an urgent need to develop ways to improve immune health in older adults. Different cultures experience ageing in different ways and this affects the profile of the ageing population, and the provision of services for older people. There is limited research into ageing among different groups, but Birmingham is leading the way.





The evidence

- In 2011 the University launched a policy commission, chaired by Professor Steve Field, on healthy ageing to explore different expectations for flourishing in later life and how good health can be promoted. The report, published in 2014, set out the commission's recommendations for healthy ageing in the UK's 21st century superdiverse society.
- Since 2012, IRIS has won over £4 million in research awards from flagship funders including the ESRC, AHRC, Neface, Horizon 2020, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the British Academy. The University of Birmingham is investing further resources into IRIS that will more than double its size and help it reach its ambition of being a global leader on superdiversity.

Thanks to a £16.4 million investment the University of Birmingham boasts the largest custom-built Sport, Exercise and Rehabilitation Sciences facility in the UK. This includes teaching and research laboratories for physiology, biochemistry, psychophysiology, biomechanics, sports psychology, motor skills, immunology, muscle mechanics and the neurophysiology of movement.



Key projects

MRC-ARTHRITIS UK CENTRE FOR MUSCULOSKELETAL AGEING RESEARCH AND THE MEDAWAR CENTRE FOR HEALTHY AGEING RESEARCH

Professor Janet Lord is director of the collaborative research venture between the Universities of Birmingham and Nottingham, which aims to understand how ageing results in loss of musculoskeletal function and to use this knowledge to intervene and minimise age-related musculoskeletal decline and disease. The major focus of this research is on exercise and diet, incorporating motivational psychology research to underpin improved uptake and adherence to lifestyle changes across all cultures.



NORFACE-FUNDED 'UNDERSTANDING THE PRACTICE AND DEVELOPING THE CONCEPT OF WELFARE BRICOLAGE' (UPWEB)

Professor Jenny Phillimore is the principal investigator of this major new comparative project that will reconceptualise welfare theory through responding to the question of how all residents living in superdiverse neighbourhoods put together their health care. Increasing population complexity, heterogeneity and pace of change under globalisation have provoked a need to rethink welfare design, alongside issues of engagement, approachability and effectiveness. The project includes partners in the universities of Bremen, Minho and Uppsala with possibilities for further case studies being explored with colleagues in South America, Australia and New Zealand.

'TRANSLATION AND TRANSLANGUAGING: INVESTIGATING LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN SUPERDIVERSE WARDS IN FOUR UK CITIES'

Professor Angela Creese leads this four-year AHRC-funded research project, which is a collaboration between academic researchers, non-academic partners and community stakeholders. It is also a partnership between four UK universities and the private, public and third sectors. This interdisciplinary research programme will develop new understandings of multilingual interaction in cities in the UK and communicate these to policy makers and communities locally, nationally, and internationally.