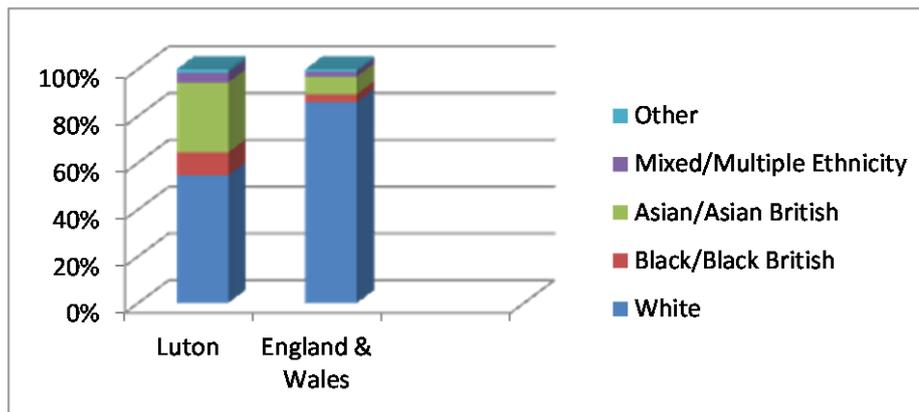
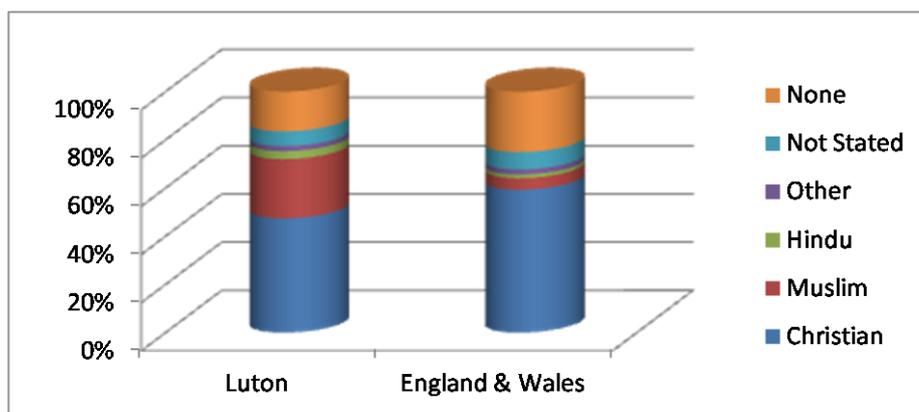


Luton - An Interesting Place to Be!

I work with the Bury Park Beech Hill Council of Churches - an ecumenical group of churches in Luton - and I have to say, Luton is a very interesting place to be. It is a town where some families have lived for several generations, whilst others are simply passing through. It is a town of very many colours and cultures. A town where faith really matters. (See the bar charts for a snapshot of this place!) It is a town where difference is widely valued and respected, but where some people seek to use difference as an excuse for hatred and division.



Ethnicity in Luton: 2011 Census Statistics



Religion in Luton: 2011 Census Statistics

Luton is a place whose diverse people can find themselves living parallel lives - occupying the same small space, but shopping, worshipping, and educating their children in different places, often with little reason to interact. Much of the work of the CRCW Project is aimed at enabling encounter, creating opportunities for people to get to know each other across faiths and cultures; opportunities to see each other as fellow human beings, with names and stories, rather than as unknowable 'others'. The Same Difference initiative is one such example.



Same Difference explores various themes in life which make us at once the same, and yet different. For example, no matter which cultural or faith group we belong to, we all have birth, marriage and death, we have traditions and expectations regarding family, childhood, youth and older age - all of these things make us 'the same', but how we mark them may be specific to our faith, culture or family group, thereby setting us apart and rendering us 'different'.



Same Difference meets monthly, gathering individuals from diverse backgrounds to share reflections, photographs and personal mementos. Conversations are aided by an abundance of cultural foods prepared by project participants, with periodic outings to discover and support local eateries. The group is warm, informal, open, and typically overflowing with laughter and goodwill. To date, it has included black, white and Asian participants; British, Caribbean, African and Eastern Europeans; Christians (of varied denominations), Hindus, Muslims, Baha'is and people of no particular faith affiliation; men and women; children through to pensioners. We even have an eighty-plenty year old white British woman who lived for many years in Bangladesh! This is Luton. And as I said... it's an interesting place to be!



Karen Campbell

