

Bengalis in London's East End

The community now

Why the East End?

Immigrants settled in the East End of London, close to the Brick Lane - Banglatown area, because living costs there were relatively cheap, while job prospects made the area particularly attractive.

The first big wave of immigration was from France in the late 1500s, with the French Huguenot Protestants fleeing persecution. (The word 'refugee' entered the English language at this time.) Both as a result of prosperity and poverty (when imports from India among other places shrank demand for their textiles), they moved to other parts of the UK. However they were followed by other waves of immigrants: the Irish escaping during the great 'potato famine' of the 1840s, the Jews from Eastern Europe in the late nineteenth century.

Banglatown

'Banglatown' is now the official name for Brick Lane and the surrounding area. This happened in 1997, after a campaign among local community activists aimed at getting recognition for the largest Bengali settlement in the UK. In 2001, the electoral ward of Spitalfields was renamed as Spitalfields and Banglatown Ward.

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