

Loneliness and ethnic minority elders in Great Britain: an exploratory study.

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Source

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Abstract

Loneliness, which describes the deficit between an individuals' expectation of the quality and/or quantity of social relationships and the actuality, is associated with poor quality of life, negative health outcomes and, in some cases, increased use of statutory services. Within Great Britain few studies have examined the prevalence of loneliness amongst older people from ethnic minorities. In this exploratory study we consider the prevalence of loneliness amongst older people, those aged 65 years and over, from the key minority groups growing old in Britain (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, African Caribbean, and Chinese) and draw explicit comparisons for these groups with the prevalence of loneliness reported for the general population and with older people in their countries of origin. We use two data sources: the Ethnicity and Loneliness Survey, a study of 300 minority elders aged 65+ living in the community, provides our prevalence estimates and secondary analysis of a study of 169 South Asian elders (aged 65+) undertaken in Birmingham to validate our prevalence rates for the Indian and Bangladeshi populations. We identified very high rates of reported loneliness, ranging from 24% to 50% amongst for those elders originating from China, Africa, the Caribbean, Pakistan and Bangladesh whilst those from India approximated to the norms of 8-10% for Britain. These results suggest that it is feasible to research loneliness amongst minority communities in Britain; that the levels of loneliness are, with the exception of the Indian population, very much higher

than for the general population but are broadly comparable with rates of loneliness reported for older people in their countries of origin. There is a rich research agenda to be developed in extending our understanding of loneliness in later life amongst the increasingly culturally and ethnically diverse older population of Great Britain.