

British Indian children have better mental health

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British Indian children have substantially better mental health than British Whites, new research from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine shows.

Anna Goodman, the report's lead author from London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine says: "Most research into ethnic differences focuses on issues where minority ethnic groups are doing worse than average. We believe it is also important to investigate areas where minority groups have an advantage, and use this understanding as a way to improve the health of the whole population".

In this study, researchers used data from the 1999 and 2004 British Child and Adolescent [Mental Health](#) Surveys, which took a nationwide sample of 5-16 year olds living in England. The proportion of Indian [children](#) with any mental health disorder was 3.7%, the lowest of any major ethnic group and substantially lower than the 10.0% proportion in White children. This Indian mental health advantage was driven by Indian children having fewer behavioural problems (e.g. aggressive or antisocial behaviour) and fewer hyperactivity problems. This pattern was reported by parents, teachers and children alike, suggesting that it reflects a real difference and is not the result of chance or biased reporting.

Part of the Indian mental health advantage was explained by the fact that Indian children were more likely to live in two parent families and had higher academic abilities. Most of the advantage, however, was not

explained by the major known risk factors. In addition, Indian children did not show the strong socio-economic gradient in behavioural and hyperactivity problems which was observed in Whites.

Anna Goodman says: "Child mental health problems have grown more common in Britain in the last 50 years, and are much more common in children from poorer families. Indian children suffer fewer problems and the socio-economic gradient is much less marked. Understanding why this particular group of British children is doing so well could therefore hold important clues for improving both child mental health and also child mental health equity in all ethnic groups".

More information: This research will be published in the Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry. The online version (ahead of print) is available at www.interscience.wiley.com/journal/119879004/issue

Provided by London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine

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