

# UK researchers call for better integration of mental health and alcohol services among minority ethnic groups

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Researchers at Lancaster University, King's College London, the University of Liverpool and Edge Hill University explored the

relationship between alcohol and mental health among UK minority ethnic groups in a joint report.

Previous research has established that both [alcohol use](#) and [mental health problems](#) can be stigmatized within some minority ethnic groups, which may be one reason why these groups are less likely to seek formal support. Researchers aimed to explore this across specific minority ethnic groups given that there are known cultural differences between groups.

The report used information from nationally representative studies and found that hazardous drinking was common among White British groups as well as some minority ethnic groups, and that poor mental health was associated with increased levels of alcohol use among some minority ethnic groups.

"In the UK, mental health problems and problematic alcohol use can affect anyone, irrespective of their [ethnic background](#). However, this report highlights both the need for, and importance of, understanding how ethnicity can shape the relationship between mental health problems and alcohol use, and the support and services that individuals receive," says Dr. Juliana Onwumere, reader in clinical psychology at King's IoPPN.

Researchers conducted interviews with adults with minority [ethnic backgrounds](#) living with a diagnosed mental health problem. The team found that there is a need for better understanding and recognition of mental health symptoms and problem drinking, and the interplay between drinking practices, help-seeking and support, and cultural frameworks.

Further interviews were conducted with service providers, community mental health staff and minority ethnic service users to understand how

alcohol use is identified and treated within mental health services. This identified several barriers preventing people being able to disclose alcohol use when presenting to mental health services, a lack of implementation of formal alcohol screening tools by mental health services, and the limited availability of a range of alcohol services targeted to or informed by the needs of minority ethnic service users.

The report includes several implications and recommendations, including a need to ensure better representation of minority ethnic groups within large UK datasets, a need for mental health and alcohol services to take a culturally appropriate preventative approach to enable better identification of problems and when to seek support, and more consistent screening of alcohol use, using formal tools within [mental health services](#).

Principal investigator Dr. Laura Goodwin from Lancaster University said, "Our research has shown that different ethnic backgrounds can use alcohol to cope with their mental health. This work has highlighted the need for better integration of mental health and alcohol services and a specific need for tailored provision that is culturally appropriate for different ethnic groups."

Senior research and policy manager at Alcohol Change UK, Mark Leyshon said, "It is unfortunately very common that alcohol and mental health problems go hand-in-hand, interacting in ways that can maintain or worsen each other. This new report has shown that people from [minority ethnic groups](#) with a mental health problem may need additional support around their alcohol use, and that both [mental health](#) and [alcohol](#) services must become more culturally literate to better serve this particular community."

**More information:** Understanding the association between mental health and alcohol use among minority ethnic groups. [s3.eu-](#)

[west-2.amazonaws.com/sr- ... ull-report\\_final.pdf](https://west-2.amazonaws.com/sr-...ull-report_final.pdf)

Provided by King's College London

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