

# Researchers find ethnic minorities are underrepresented in studies into multiple long-term health conditions

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New research shows that ethnic minorities are underrepresented in studies into multiple long-term conditions (MLTCs), despite being more likely to be affected.

A [systematic review](#) published in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* found a lack of reporting on ethnicity and underrepresentation of ethnic [minority](#) groups in intervention studies to improve the management of MLTCs.

The prevalence of MLTCs is escalating, due to aging populations and lifestyle shifts. In England, an estimated one in four adults have two or more long-term health conditions, impacting quality of life and [health care costs](#). Ethnic minorities, previous research says, face an increased burden due to being more likely to experience higher levels of socioeconomic deprivation—a key determinant of the development of MLTCs.

The new review examined 13 intervention studies, encompassing more than 4,000 participants. The analysis revealed that only four out of 13 studies provided any information on the ethnic breakdown of the study population. Moreover, ethnic minority groups were underrepresented among the people who took part in the studies.

In eight of the 13 studies, there were selection biases whereby the inclusion criteria explicitly stated that participants must be able to speak English (or the country's national language) or have access to a translator. No studies reported any cultural adaptations or tailoring, such as the use of translators or translated materials.

Meanwhile, [socioeconomic status](#) (SES) was reported in 12 out of 13 studies but representation of low SES groups varied across studies due to different measures being used. With low SES groups more likely to be affected by MLTCs, the paper calls for standardization and consistency

in how SES is reported.

The researchers said that it was important that [health research](#) reports on and includes the people whom it may most benefit. Lead researcher, Zara Kayani of the University of Leicester, said, "Ethnicity data should be recognized as being equally as important as reporting participants' sex and age. Better representation of underserved groups is needed in health research. This would contribute towards reducing health inequalities and would ensure health research is reflective of those groups who it may be most advantageous for."

The researchers concluded that future MLTC intervention studies should focus on improving the recruitment of ethnic minority groups, and ensure they report on the ethnicity of included participants. Low SES groups should also be represented in MLTC [intervention](#) studies and efforts should be made to improve recruitment of these groups as studies of interventions may benefit these specific groups the most.

**More information:** Reporting and representation of underserved groups in intervention studies for patients with multiple long-term conditions: a systematic review, *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* (2024). [DOI: 10.1177/01410768241233109](https://doi.org/10.1177/01410768241233109)

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