

## Experiences of black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) older people

- Approximately 97% of 65+ adults are white, 2% are Asian and 1% are black.
- This means there are approximately 200,000 Asian older people in England, and 100,000 black older people.
- Though this population is currently relatively small, it is expected to increase significantly in the future.

This briefing summarises findings from a project undertaken by Independent Age to explore the experiences of specific groups of older people.

This is one of a series of six briefings based on findings from 45 interviews with older people in 2019 and analysis of data from the *Understanding Society* survey. It focuses on England only.

This briefing focuses on older people who identify as black, Asian or minority ethnic (BAME). In our quantitative work, we defined this group as older people who describe themselves as Asian or black<sup>1</sup>.

### Health and wellbeing

#### Little difference

- We found very few significant differences between BAME older people and white older people when looking at health and wellbeing. It was also not a subject that was highlighted in interviews.
- However, BAME older people are more likely to have had more than 10 visits to the GP in the past 12 months.
- BAME older people also report being limited in what they can accomplish as a result of their mental health (Figure 1).
- Other research has suggested racial inequalities in mental health provision, and this warrants further investigation.

### Financial security

#### More disadvantaged

- According to our data, BAME older people are more likely to find it quite or very difficult to get by financially, and say they would not be able to pay an unexpected expense (Figure 2).
- In interviews, several of the BAME participants were living in social housing, and many had experienced serious problems with their housing.
- This is reflected in the data, particularly with black older people. Just over half of black older people live in social housing (compared to approximately 16% of white older people), and are more likely to experience severe housing issues (such as damp, mould or lack of repairs).
- Black older people are also many times more likely to have difficulty paying an unexpected expense (Figure 3).

Figure 1: Accomplished less due to mental health

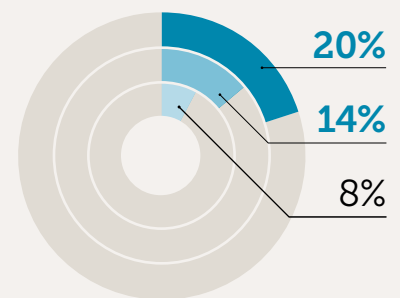
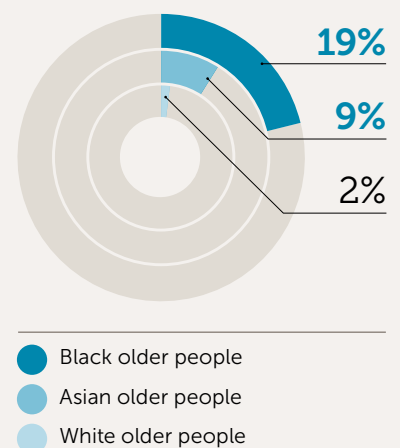


Figure 2: Proportion who find it difficult to get by financially



- Black older people
- Asian older people
- White older people



*I've found a lot of comfort and support in the black community... we all share being proud black people with similar heritage.*

**Linda, 75**

<sup>1</sup> 'Mixed' ethnic background was judged to be too low a sample size to evaluate because it is <100.

## Social connectedness

### Strength through community

- Many BAME participants in our interviews felt they benefited from a strong sense of community. As many had neighbours of a similar heritage, they did not feel isolated or singled out in their community. Most belonged to specific community groups based on heritage, religion and demographics, eg Leeds Black Elders, West Indian Centre, Birmingham Muslim Centre.
- However, we also found that language or even accent can be an exclusionary factor. Some apologised for their fluency after 30 years of living in England, despite speaking English to a good standard.
- While black older people are far more likely to live alone than white older people, with around half of black older people living alone, Asian older people are far less likely, with only around 15% living alone.
- Asian older people are also more likely to have two close friends or fewer and worry about becoming a victim of crime.

### Discrimination

- As *Understanding Society* asks very limited questions about discrimination, it was hard to produce quantitative findings in this area. Most of our BAME participants in the qualitative research reported not feeling discriminated against, referring to how things have improved in England in the past few decades. Many had stories of discrimination they had experienced in the past.
- However, this is not to say it does not happen currently. Many forms of discrimination are hidden and hard to pick up in this kind of research, particularly structural and institutional racism.

## Getting around

- BAME older people tend to be more reliant on bus travel, and travel less by private car than white older people (Figure 4). Interestingly, they are also more likely to rate bus services as good or better, a relationship also observed in the 'low income' subgroup (Figure 5).

Figure 3: Would find it difficult to pay an unexpected expense

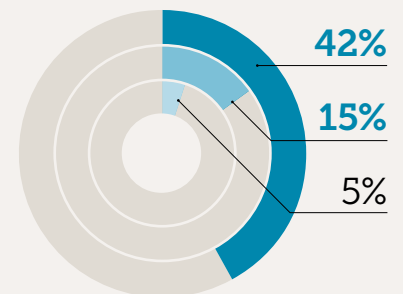


Figure 4: Use bus service three times a week or more

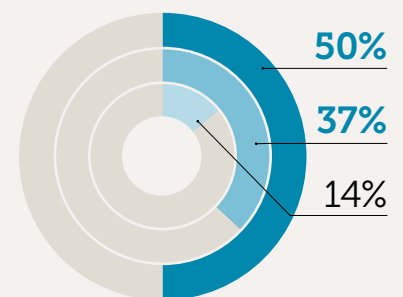
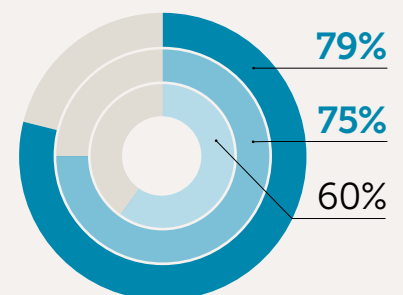


Figure 5: Likelihood of rating standard of public transport as very good or excellent



- Black older people
- Asian older people
- White older people



### How to find out more

You can read our in-depth report and other briefings on physical health, mental health, low income, carers and older people without children at [independentage.org/in-focus](https://independentage.org/in-focus)