



Midway between Manchester and Mumbai: the living arrangements of older Indians living in the UK

Improved evidence on the living arrangements of older people is crucial for unravelling the complex interplay between living arrangements, health status and the provision and receipt of informal care. Such evidence is also critical for informing the design of policies and local interventions aimed at safeguarding and improving older people's wellbeing. This Briefing Paper contributes to our understanding of the living arrangements of older people of Indian heritage living in the UK, comparing their circumstances to those of older people from the White majority population as well as older people living in India.

Key Points

- Living with others is the most prevalent type of living arrangement for older people in India, while living with one's spouse is the most prevalent type of living arrangement in the UK (for both White British and Indian elders).
- In terms of living alone, Indian elders in the UK occupy a middle ground between White British elders in the UK and Indian elders in India, with just over a fifth living alone compared with around a third of White British elders and just one in sixteen older people in India.
- Older women are more likely to live alone than men, both in the UK and in India.
- The patterns of living arrangements among older Indians in the UK are 'closer' to those of older White British individuals than Indians in India.

Introduction

As of the 2011 census, there were almost 1.5 million individuals of Indian heritage (not including those of mixed Indian and other ancestry) living in the UK, making them the single largest ethnic minority

population in the country and accounting for 2.3% of the total UK population. This compares with just over one million in 2001; 840,000 in 1991; 676,000 in 1981 and just 275,000 in 1971. Thus the majority of the current Indian population in the UK arrived in the last 40 years. In 2011, just 8% of the UK Indian

population were aged 65 and over. However as those who arrived during the 1970s–1990s age, this number is set to increase significantly. By 2051, it is estimated that there will be over 600,000 Indians aged 65 and over living in England and Wales, with an estimated 440,000 (14%) aged 70 and over and 70,000 (2.2%) aged 85 and over. Understanding the needs of this population as it ages will therefore be critical for the design of appropriate services, for example in the areas of health and social care. This Briefing Paper presents new evidence on the living arrangements of older Indians in the UK, comparing their circumstances to those of older people from the White British majority population as well as older people living in India.

The study

This paper uses data from the first wave (collected between 2009 and 2011) of Understanding Society - a nationally representative survey of the UK. Exceptionally, the survey includes an Ethnic Minority boost sample designed to include at least 1,000 individuals from five key ethnic groups: Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Caribbean and African. This yields an overall analytical sample

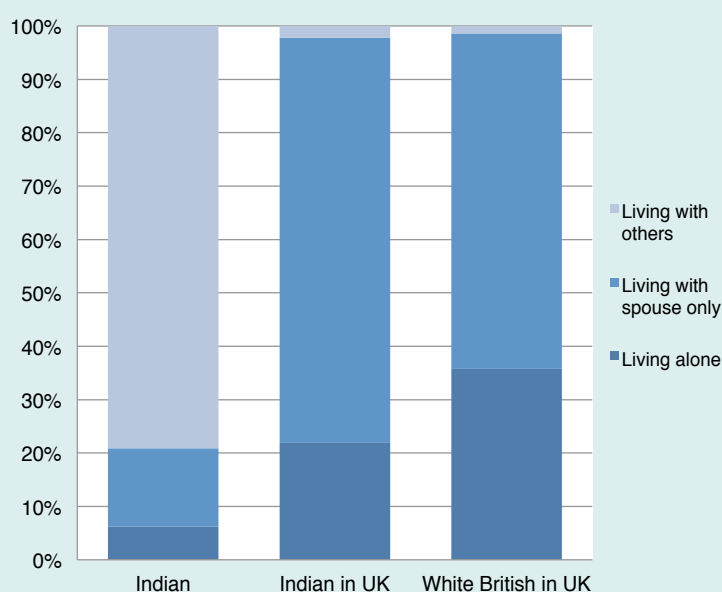
of 12,187 respondents aged 60 and over, of whom 456 are of Indian ethnicity, making it an ideal dataset for this study. Comparative analysis for India draws upon the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) 'Building a Knowledge Base on Population Ageing in India' (BKPAI) survey. The survey was carried out in 2011 in seven states; Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, which have a higher percentage of individuals over 60 years of age compared to the national average, yielding a total sample of 9,692. Indian Punjabis account for 45% of all Indians currently living in the UK, with Bengalis constituting the second largest group. Given that the BKPAI survey includes these two provinces, it provides a meaningful comparison of the origin community for Indian elders in the UK.

Main findings

Living arrangements

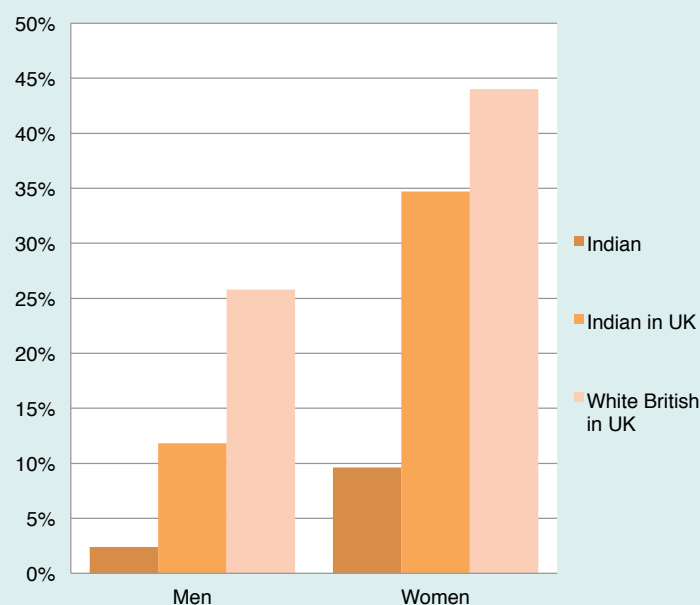
Figure 1 shows the living arrangements of individuals aged 60 and over in the UK and India. We distinguish three types of living arrangements: living alone, living with spouse only and living with

Figure 1: Percentage of individuals aged 60 and over by living arrangements and country



Source: Authors' own analysis of BKPAI 2011, USoc 2009-2011

Figure 2: Percentage of individuals aged 60 and over living alone by gender and country



Source: Authors' own analysis of BKPAI 2011, USoc 2009-2011

others (including with a servant (in India), spouse and others such as adult children, grandchildren etc.). The graph highlights that living with a spouse is the dominant living arrangement for both the White majority population and Indian elders in the UK, whilst older people in India are most likely to live in an extended household with others. A significant minority of White British elders live alone (36%). Interestingly, over a fifth (22%) of older people of Indian heritage living in the UK also live alone, whilst this remains the exception in India.

Living alone

Figure 2 highlights more clearly the 'middle' position occupied by older Indian men and women living in the UK, with 12% of Indian men and 35% of Indian women in the UK living alone compared to 26% and 44% of White British older men and women, and just 3% and 10% respectively of Indian elders living in India.

Table 1 sheds more light on the characteristics of those who live alone. In all three groups, a larger proportion of women live alone than men: this is especially the case in India where women account for four-fifths of all older people living alone. There are marked differences in the age distribution of

solo elders, reflecting in part differences in the age distribution of the older population per se across ethnic groups. However, again, Indian elders in the UK occupy a middle ground (Figure 3). With the ageing of the UK Indian population, it is anticipated that both the proportion of those living alone, and the share of those aged 80 and over in that group will increase, moving towards the same pattern as seen amongst White British elders.

Interestingly, despite their relatively younger age profile, a higher proportion of older people of Indian heritage living alone in the UK report poor health over the past year (29%) than either solo Indian elders (18%) or White British elders living alone (16%). Our previous research has found that older people from ethnic minority groups report worse health than the White British majority population, with this in part reflecting other inequalities between ethnic groups, i.e. socioeconomic position and social class, health service access and use, racial discrimination, as well as differences in health risk behaviours.

Table 1: Characteristics of individuals aged 60 and over living alone

	Indian in India	Indian in UK	White British in UK
% of all 60+ living alone	6.2%	21.9%	35.8%
Amongst those living alone:			
Male	19%	30%	33%
Female	81%	70%	67%
Age:			
60-69	61%	46%	38%
70-79	30%	42%	34%
80+	10%	12%	28%
General health in last 12 months:			
Good	45%	37%	60%
Fair	37%	35%	25%
Poor	18%	29%	16%

Source: Authors' own analysis of BKPAI 2011, USoc 2009-2011

Figure 3: Age distribution of individuals aged 60 and over living alone by country



Source: Authors' own analysis of BKPAI 2011, USoc 2009-2011

Policy implications

Persons of Indian heritage comprise the largest minority ethnic group in the UK and it is anticipated that over the next 20 years there will be a rapid and significant increase in the number of Indian elders living in the UK. At present, the majority live with their spouse, but a substantial minority (22%) live alone. The combination of solo living with a higher prevalence of poor health means that local authorities need to start now to plan appropriate services to support the growing number of older people of Indian origin living the UK.

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