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News Release

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Scots born abroad have lower death rates, research shows

People from most ethnic groups who were born abroad but live in Scotland have lower death rates than those born here, a study has found.

Chinese people have the lowest death rates, followed by people from Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic groups.

Researchers led by the University of Edinburgh looked at records of 4.26 million people who died in Scotland between 2001 and 2013, noting the ethnic group and country of birth in each case. These records were securely linked to anonymised data from the 2001 Scotland census.

They found that both males and females in most ethnic minority groups had lower death rates than the White Scottish population.

Death rates for Chinese males of all ages, for example, were almost half those of the White Scottish population.

People who identify as Other British or Other White also had a survival advantage, the study found.

White Scottish people born abroad also had lower death rates than those born in Scotland.

In contrast, White Irish men had similar death rates. Males of Mixed Background had slightly higher death rates.

The effects were similar even when the researchers took into account socio-economic status.

Differences in health-related behaviours could be a key reason for the trend, the researchers say.

The findings are part of the Scottish Health and Ethnicity Linkage Study, which aims to improve the future health status of all populations in Scotland.

The study, in collaboration with the Universities of Aberdeen and Glasgow and with NHS National Services Scotland's Information Services Division, is published in the journal *PLOS Medicine*. It was funded by the Scottish Chief Scientist's Office and supported by NHS Health Scotland.

Ranked among the top universities in the world

Lead researcher, Professor Raj Bhopal, of the University of Edinburgh's Usher Institute of Population Health Sciences and Informatics, said: "Many people are surprised to learn that ethnic minority populations, and particularly those born abroad, have lower mortality than the Scottish population. The findings contradict the widely held perception that immigrants and ethnic minorities are a burden on the health and health care of our society. In fact, we have a great deal to learn in Scotland about how to improve the health of the whole population, particularly the White Scottish people."

The first World Congress on Migration, Ethnicity, Race and Health will be held in Edinburgh in May. Leading experts will discuss research to tackle health inequalities across the globe.

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R.S.Bhopal et al. Mortality, ethnicity, and country of birth on a national scale, 2001–2013: A retrospective cohort (Scottish Health and Ethnicity Linkage Study). PLOS Medicine, 2018.

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