

# Loneliness among under-represented older adults in the UK: a study of minority ethnic and LGBT populations

Professor Christina Victor and Dr Isla Rippon

## Background

Internationally loneliness has been identified as a major public health problem. Although there is a substantial body of research about loneliness in older adults in the UK significant evidence gaps remain. Key omissions are those reporting loneliness experiences of older people from ethnic minorities and those who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual and transgender (LGBT).

These two groups, who are under-represented in UK gerontological research, are included in our recently funded project, Socially Inclusive Ageing across the Lifecourse (SIAL). In this poster we explicitly focus upon the experiences of loneliness for older adults, aged 50+, from the LGBT and minority ethnic communities.

## Aims

To report:

- the prevalence of loneliness among people from ethnic minorities
- the prevalence of loneliness among people who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual

## Methods and Measures

- Data are presented from wave 9 (2017-19) of the UK Household Longitudinal Study (UKHLS)
- UKHLS was established in 2009 and participants are followed up annually. It was enhanced by an ethnic group sample boost
- Wave 9 is the first wave to include loneliness measures
- Loneliness was measured using the three-item UCLA scale. A score of 6 and over out of 9 defining loneliness
- Sexual orientation identity measure response options were: heterosexual; gay or lesbian; bisexual; prefer not to say or other
- Ethnic group was derived from self-reported or household member reported demographic data
- Data presented from respondents aged 50 and over who completed the loneliness measure

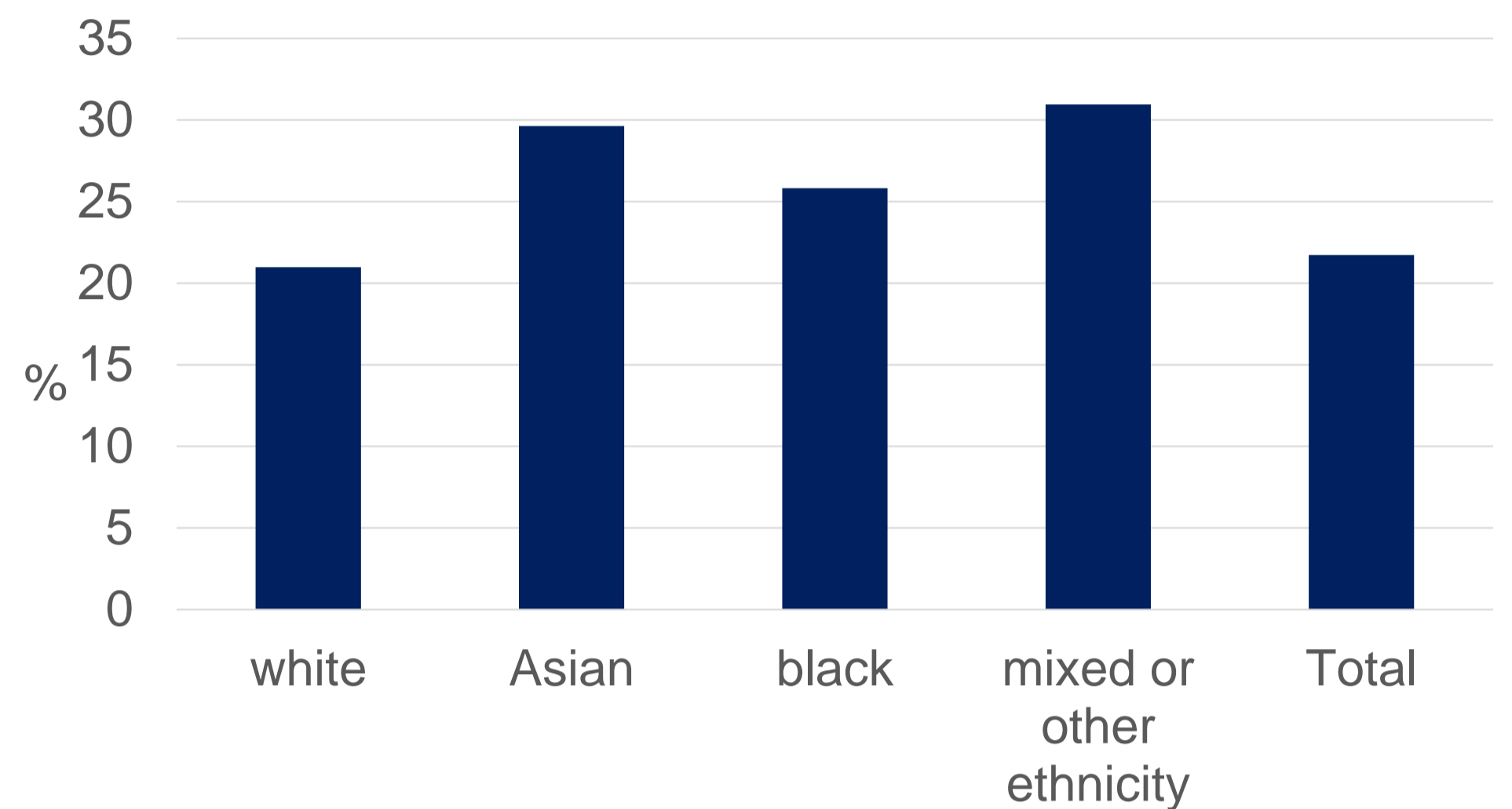
## Results

Of our total sample of 16,805 who completed the loneliness measure:

- 1.5% of respondents identified as LGB & 3.2% selected 'prefer not say or other'
- 5.4% identified as Asian, 2.9% as black and 1.5% as other or mixed ethnicity
- Overall, 21.7% of the population aged 50 and over were lonely

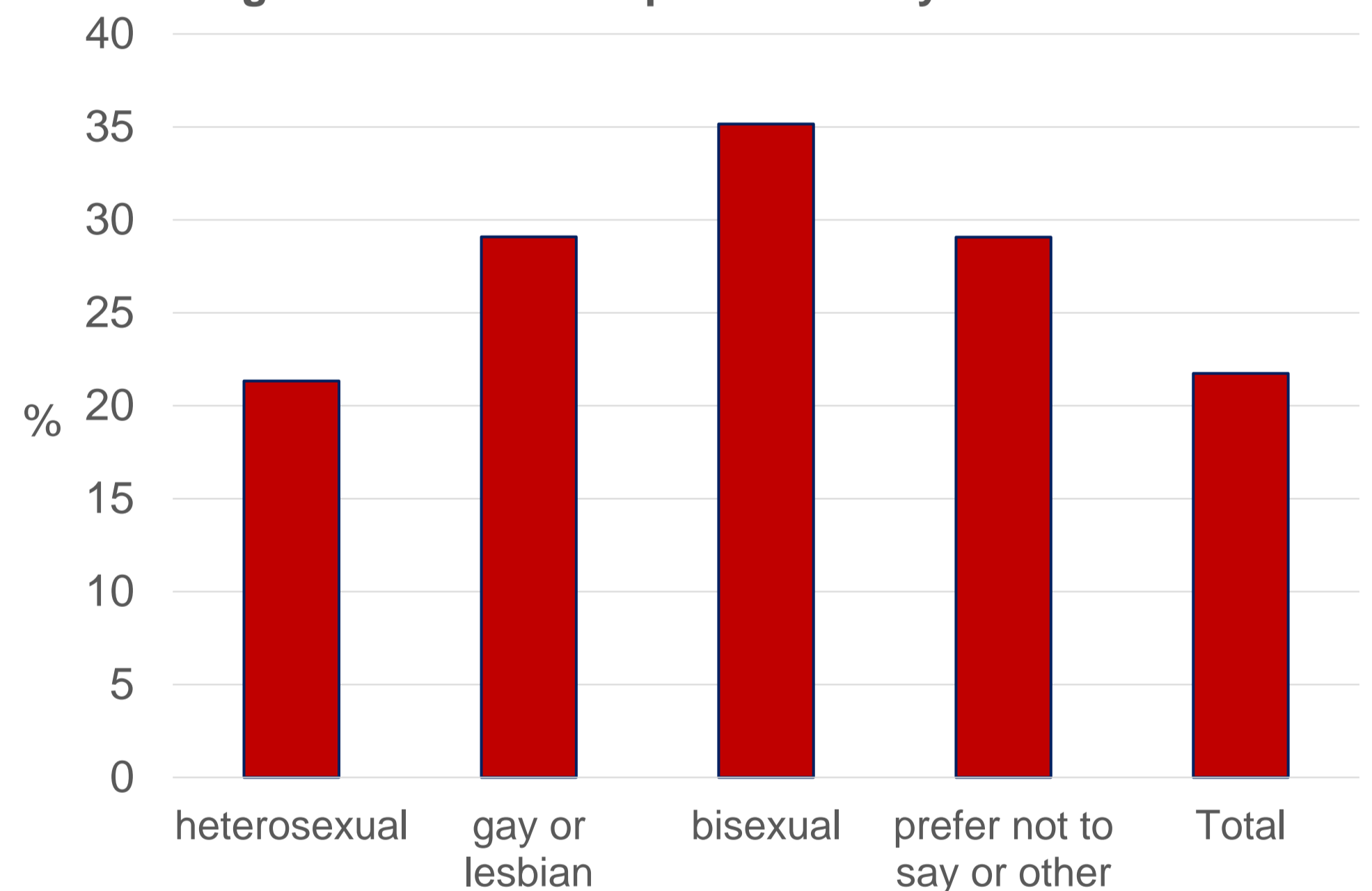
Participants from a black, Asian or other ethnic minority reported significantly higher loneliness than white respondents (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Loneliness prevalence by ethnic group



Respondents identifying as gay or lesbian or as bisexual reported significantly greater loneliness in comparison to those who identified as heterosexual (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Loneliness prevalence by LGB status



## Final Thoughts and Future Plans

Our study is novel and timely in demonstrating the higher prevalence of loneliness in two under-represented groups of older adults with the potential consequences this may have for their health and wellbeing in later life.

Future aims of the project include:

- To examine loneliness longitudinally, alongside social isolation and wider measures of social health
- To examine how it changes over time for older people from each group of interest
- Compare with the experiences of people of the same age and gender drawn from the wider community
- To identify factors that may explain observed social health outcomes and variations