

DOES CHILDHOOD ADVERSITY ACCOUNT FOR POORER MENTAL HEALTH IN SECOND GENERATION IRISH PEOPLE LIVING IN BRITAIN? BIRTH COHORT STUDY FROM BRITAIN

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Background: Worldwide, the Irish diaspora experience elevated psychiatric morbidity across generations, not accounted for through socioeconomic position. The present study assessed the contribution of intergenerational migration and settlement-related adversity in accounting for adult mental health, in second generation Irish people.

Methods: Analysis of prospective data from a nationally representative birth cohort from Britain, comprising 17,000 babies born in a single week in 1958 and followed up to mid-life. Common mental disorders were assessed at age 44/ 45.

Results: Relative to the rest of the cohort, second generation Irish children grew up in marked material and social disadvantage, which tracked into early adulthood. By mid-life, parity was reached between second generation Irish cohort members and the rest of the sample on most disadvantage indicators. At age 23 Irish cohort members were more likely to screen positive for common mental disorders (OR: 1.44; 95% CI: 1.06, 1.94). This had reduced slightly by mid-life (OR: 1.27; 95% CI: 0.96, 1.69). Adjustment for childhood and early adulthood adversity fully attenuated differences in adult mental health disadvantages.

Conclusions: Social and material disadvantage experienced in childhood continues to have long-range adverse effects on mental health at mid-life, in second generation Irish cohort members. This suggests important mechanisms over the life-course, which may have important policy implications in the settlement of migrant families.