

Missing from Cardiac Rehabilitation: Intersectional Inequalities Among Ethnically Diverse Women in the UK.

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Why This Matters

Cardiovascular disease is the **leading cause of morbidity and mortality** among women in the UK.¹ Yet women, and especially those from ethnic minority communities, remain profoundly underrepresented in cardiac rehabilitation programmes.²

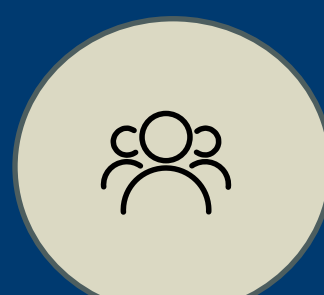
Despite national priorities to reduce health inequalities, limited qualitative evidence exists on how **intersecting social identities** shape engagement. This constrains NHS efforts to deliver equitable, person-centred care.

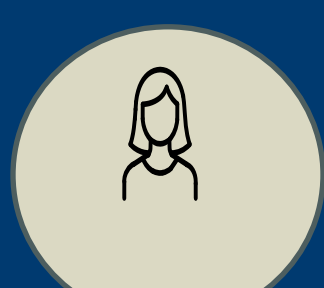
▲ Women from ethnic minority backgrounds face compounded, overlapping barriers, not single, isolated challenges.³

Aims

To explore how **gender, ethnicity, culture, religion, immigration status** and **socioeconomic position intersect** to shape access to and participation in cardiac care and rehabilitation among ethnically diverse women in the UK.

Methods

 4 Focus Groups
Community settings & online

 19 Women
Diverse ethnic backgrounds across the UK

 Reflexive Thematic Analysis⁴
Informed by intersectionality theory⁵

What Women Told Us : Four Key Themes

“My health is being failed by the system”

Delayed diagnosis, dismissal, and structural racism blocked access to care.

“I care for others more than myself”

Gendered caregiving roles left no room for self-prioritising health.

“We do NOT talk about health”

Cultural stigma around illness acted as a powerful barrier to seeking help.

“Reimagine CR as a community hub”

Women want locally delivered, culturally safe, relationship-centred support.

What Needs to Change



Co-Design

With ethnically diverse women, as active partners



Cultural Safety

Locally embedded, trust-based delivery



Equity-Driven

Address structural and systemic barriers



Equity-driven, intersectional, culturally responsive cardiac rehabilitation is needed in the NHS. Co-designed care must dismantle structural barriers and centre the lived experiences of marginalised women.

References

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