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## **Long-term effects of the British evacuation of children during World War 2 on their adult mental health.**

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### **Abstract**

**OBJECTIVES:** This study of 870 respondents aged 62-72 years investigates possible **long-term effects** on adult mental health due to temporary childhood separation by **evacuation** in the United Kingdom during World War 2.

**METHOD:** Using univariate and multivariate analyses associations were examined between upbringing, **evacuation** experience and certain life-course variables with the lifetime incidence of depression and clinical anxiety, and also with the dependency and self-critical factors of the Depressive Experiences Questionnaire (DEQ) (Blatt, S.J., D'Affitti, J.P., & Quinlan, D.M. (1976). Experiences of depression in normal young adults. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 85, 383-389.) were examined by univariate and multivariate analyses.

**RESULTS:** Those evacuated at a young age, 4-6 years, or who received poor foster care, were found to be at a greater risk of depression and clinical anxiety, with high levels of self-criticism. Compared to other groups respondents evacuated at 13-15 years age, who received good care, had reduced incidences of both affective disorders, comparable to those who were not evacuated. The quality of home nurture was also found to be significantly associated with both disorders. Structural equation models for each sex based on those variables significantly associated with depression explained 45% of the variance of the incidence of depression for males and 25% for females. The models also confirmed the relatively high levels of dependency for females and their vulnerability to these levels in terms of depression.

### **CONCLUSION:**

The study demonstrated significant associations between childhood experiences and lifespan mental health, reinforcing the importance of knowledge of childhood history in the clinical treatment of older adults.

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