

# Schizophrenia – Environmental Contributions



## This activity will help you to:

- Understand evidence for environmental contributions to schizophrenia
- Formulate hypotheses about the possible environmental contribution to schizophrenia
- Evaluate the role of environmental factors in schizophrenia

Here is a collection of research findings about risk of developing schizophrenia. Read through the findings, and then do the following.

1. Summarise what the findings as a whole seem to indicate about a person's risk of developing schizophrenia.
2. Suggest one or more hypotheses that might explain the relationships you have identified.

## The Findings

- A well-known population in which ethnic minority status has been associated with higher rates of schizophrenia in first and second-generation individuals is the African-Caribbean people living in the UK. These populations are not or are much less risk in situations where they become majority populations. Fernando (1988) found that overall, Afro-Caribbean people in the UK are between 2 and 7 times more likely than the general population to develop schizophrenia.
- Pedersen & Morten (2001) found that individuals who spent their first 15 years of life in a highly urban area were nearly three times as likely to be diagnosed with schizophrenia, compared with people who grew up in rural areas
- Mortensen et al (1999) investigated the effect of place and season of birth on risk of developing schizophrenia in a Danish cohort of 1.75 million. There was a clear dose-response relationship between urbanicity and risk of admission for schizophrenia.
- In a classic research study by Faris and Dunham (1939), admission rates for schizophrenia in Chicago were demonstrated to be higher in inner city neighbourhoods than towards the periphery of the city.
- Boydell et al (2001) demonstrated that as the proportion of non-white ethnic minorities in a given neighbourhoods decreases, the rate of incidence of schizophrenia increases (for non-whites).