

# Young people of multiple disadvantaged groups face worse health due to more discrimination

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An Indiana University study found that teens and young adults who are members of multiple minority or disadvantaged groups face more discrimination than their more privileged peers and, as a result, report worse mental and physical health.

In general, as the number of minority or disadvantaged groups to which [young people](#) belonged increased -- reflecting their gender, [socioeconomic status](#), race and [sexual identity](#) -- the number of forms of discrimination they experienced and their frequency of exposure to discrimination also increased. As a result of their exposure to more forms of and more frequent discrimination, multiply disadvantaged teens and young adults experienced the most [health problems](#).

"Past work on discrimination and health focused on adults and examined the relationship between discrimination and health by only looking at one form of discrimination," said Eric Anthony Grollman, a [doctoral student](#) in the College of Arts and Sciences' Department of Sociology at IU Bloomington. "For me, these new findings really speak to the importance of looking at the multiple dimensions of discrimination and health. You cannot capture an individual's full experience and well-being by just looking at race, for example."

Grollman's study, "Multiple Forms of Perceived Discrimination and Health Among Adolescents and Young Adults," appears in the June issue

of the [Journal of Health and Social Behavior](#).

For the study, Grollman analyzed responses from 1,052 participants in the Black Youth Culture Survey of the University of Chicago's Black Youth Project. These data, which also included responses from young people who were Latino and white, provided a nationally [representative sample](#) that was diverse and evenly distributed across ages of survey participants, who were 15 to 25 years old.

Grollman's study considered four forms of discrimination -- based on race, gender, [sexual orientation](#) and social class -- as well as the frequency of discrimination. Teens and young adults in his study reported experiencing nearly two forms of discrimination on average. Those who were not from a minority or disadvantaged group (i.e., white, heterosexual males, whose families were never on welfare) reported experiencing 1.6 forms; those from one minority or disadvantaged group reported experiencing 1.7 forms; those from two reported experiencing 1.9 forms; those from three reported experiencing 2.1 forms; and those from four reported experiencing 2.8 forms.

When comparing teens and young adults who were not members of a minority or disadvantaged group with young people who were members of only one such group, Grollman found little difference in their reports of the number of forms and the frequency of discrimination they experienced.

"Teens and young adults who are members of only one minority or disadvantaged group are virtually indistinguishable from young people who are not members of any of these types of groups in terms of their exposure to discrimination and their [health](#) status," Grollman said.

A gap between teens and young adults who were not members of a minority or disadvantaged group and young people who were members

of such groups became increasingly apparent, however, as the number of minority or disadvantaged groups increased.

Other findings from the study include:

- More than half of the young people reported experiencing two or more forms of discrimination, and 13 percent reported experiencing all four forms of [discrimination](#)
- The measurements for depressive symptoms looked at the number of days teens and young adults reported feeling blue in the past month (from 0 to 30) plus the number of days they reported feeling disinterested in things in the past month (from 0 to 30), for a scale ranging from 0 to 60. Young people who were not members of a minority or disadvantaged group averaged a score of 8.3, with the number increasing to 18.7 for those who were members of four such groups.
- The self-rated scale for [physical health](#) ranged from 0 (fair/poor) to 3 (excellent). Teens and [young adults](#) who were not members of a minority or disadvantaged group averaged a score of 1.9; those from one averaged 1.9; those from two averaged 1.7; those from three averaged 1.6; and those from four averaged 1.3.

**More information:** "Multiple Forms of Perceived Discrimination and Health Among Adolescents and Young Adults," *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*.

Provided by Indiana University

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