

Study finds state wealth affects women's heart disease risk

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According to new research from Brigham and Women's Hospital (BWH), a state's level of wealth or poverty is linked with levels of cardiovascular inflammation in women. Cardiovascular inflammation is a key risk factor for heart disease. This research, led by Cheryl R. Clark, MD, ScD, the director of health equity research and intervention at the Center for Community Health and Health Equity at BWH was published March 20 in the online edition of *BMC Public Health*.

"We have been learning that geography matters for [heart disease risk](#)," Clark said. "Our study suggests that state-level resources may contribute to early [risk factors for heart disease](#) in women."

Researchers examined each state's gross domestic product, [poverty rate](#) and level of financial inequality, and then compared those factors to biomarkers of cardiovascular inflammation in women nation-wide who took part in the Women's Health Study. They found that women who live in wealthy states have lower levels of cardiovascular inflammation than women who live in states with fewer resources. Additionally, women who live in states with higher levels of financial inequality have higher levels of cardiovascular inflammation than women in states with lower inequality.

Researchers also found that even when an individual woman's diet, weight, personal income level, exercise and smoking habits were taken into account, the wealth of their home state still significantly impacted their level of cardiovascular inflammation.

Researchers note that further research is needed to examine the reasons behind this disparity.

Provided by Brigham and Women's Hospital

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