

# Education, finances affect risk of heart disease more for women than men

March 20 2014, by Diane Swanbrow

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(Medical Xpress)—Low levels of education and financial assets have long been linked to increased risks of cardiovascular disease. But a new University of Michigan study shows that the association is much greater for middle-aged and older women than it is for men of similar ages.

"These findings suggest that [health care](#) professionals should consider

exploring interventions aimed at reducing the risks of heart disease for this group of women," said Kristi Rahrig Jenkins, a U-M sociologist who co-authored the study published last month in *Women & Health*.

Jenkins and U-M researcher Mary Beth Ofstedal analyzed data from nearly 6,000 participants in the Health and Retirement Study, a survey of a nationally representative sample of U.S. adults over age 50 conducted by the U-M Institute for Social Research.

The data included physical measurements on a variety of cardiovascular risk factors, including body mass index, systolic and diastolic blood pressure, and cholesterol, collected during face-to-face visits. The researchers correlated these data with demographic and socioeconomic measures, including educational attainment, income and assets.

"We found that the associations between most socioeconomic indicators and cardiovascular risk were stronger for women than for men," Jenkins said. "Given the rapidly growing aging population in the U.S. and the increasing costs of health care, it's essential for us to be more effective in reaching out to groups at higher risk. Providing interventions for women with lower levels of assets and education is an important first step."

Provided by University of Michigan

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