

Health gap for disadvantaged people "disturbing"

October 10 2014, by David Ellis

The gap in quality of health between the most advantaged and most disadvantaged Australians persists, according to new national figures released today by University of Adelaide public health researchers.

Levels of smoking, obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and psychological distress are many times greater among the most disadvantaged population, the figures show.

Based on 2011-2013 data from the Australia Bureau of Statistics, the University's Public Health Information Development Unit today provides the latest update about variations in [health](#) across Australia on its website: www.adelaide.edu.au/phidu

The figures detail rates of disease and [health risks](#), and highlight differences across a range of socially advantaged and disadvantaged groups. The data are mapped for every council area in Australia, as well as for Population Health Areas designed by the Unit, which are based on suburbs and localities across Australia.

"We are very clearly seeing a widening in the [health gap](#), not only between the 'haves' and 'have nots', but across the population at every step in the social spectrum. This should be of concern to everyone," says the Director of the University's Public Health Information Development Unit, Associate Professor John Glover.

"Almost 25% of people in the most [disadvantaged group](#) are still

smoking, compared with 12% in the most advantaged group. While smoking rates have fallen across the whole population, they've fallen at a much slower rate among the most disadvantaged. This is a key target group for smoking prevention, and one that is always hit hardest by increases in cigarette prices, which take little account of social and other pressures on disadvantaged people," he says.

"Rates of obesity are 34% for people in the most disadvantaged group, compared with 21% in the most advantaged group.

"The most disadvantaged people also have the worst rates of asthma (12%, compared with 9%), arthritis (17%, compared with 12%), diabetes mellitus (9%, compared with 3%) and [cardiovascular disease](#) (19%, compared with 15%)."

Associate Professor Glover says another key indicator is psychological distress, with 17% of the most disadvantaged group suffering from high or very high [psychological distress](#) compared with just 7% among the most advantaged group.

"All of these figures paint a very unhealthy, unhappy and distressing picture for those who are doing it tough in our society," Associate Professor Glover says. "We hope that this information will assist governments in developing policies and planning health and other services to address the drivers behind these disturbing outcomes."

Provided by University of Adelaide

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