

New study reports worsening health conditions increase risk of mortgage default and disclosure

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The mortgage strain of American home ownership can lead to poor health but a new study finds that the inverse may also be true— changes in health can serve as a predictor to mortgage distress.

According to a study published in the journal of *Epidemiology and Community Health*, co-authored by Jason N. Houle, assistant professor of sociology at Dartmouth College and Danya E. Keene, assistant professor of epidemiology ([chronic diseases](#)) at the Yale School of Public Health, changes in [health](#) limitations and [chronic conditions](#) increased the risk of [mortgage default](#) and [foreclosure](#) between 2007 and 2010. This relationship however, is partially mediated by changes in family income, savings, and an individual's status in [health insurance](#) and employment, with the latter two factors resulting from likely job loss.

Additional key findings from the study include the following:

- Middle aged adults whose chronic conditions worsened from age 40-50, have nearly twice the risk of mortgage default and 2.5 times the risk of foreclosure than those whose chronic conditions did not worsen.
- Chronic conditions in the study, included: cardiovascular disease and heart failure, lung disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes, hypertension, arthritis, asthma, joint pain and osteoporosis.

The study builds on data from the National Longitudinal survey of Youth 1979 Cohort, and focuses on middle-aged respondents who owned a home between 2007 and 2010. A pdf of the study is available upon request.

"Most previous work on this topic centered on the potential impact of going through a home foreclosure on health and well-being. It was surprising to us that so little research considered how becoming ill or disabled compromised household finances and increased the risk of default and foreclosure. By following people over time, and looking at how changes in health status were associated with later default and foreclosure, we were able to tease apart this process and examine how this unfolds over time," said Jason N. Houle at Dartmouth.

Provided by Dartmouth College

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