

# Research shows link between young people's mental health and future inequality

January 26 2016

---

Mental health issues in early adulthood can impact upon a person's future life chances, a new study has shown.

Researchers at the MRC/CSO Social and Public Health Sciences Unit, University of Glasgow, looking at the emergence of [health inequalities](#) in young adults, have highlighted evidence that mental health in young adulthood has an effect on person's later socio-economic position, and most notably for women.

The research, published today in the *BMC Public Health* journal, suggests that early adulthood is a key time in the complex relationship between socio-economic position and health. Those with poorer mental health at ages 18 and (more clearly) 24 were more likely to have a lower socio-economic position (in less skilled jobs or not working) or be unemployed a few years later. These may be sensitive times because they are when young people negotiate transitions out of education and move into more adult roles and environments. The researchers did not find similar associations between physical health and future socio-economic position.

The findings suggest [mental health problems](#) may make it more difficult for young people to manage educational and work transitions successfully, which then impacts on their chances of a better socio-economic future.

Knowing that health inequalities exist, the researchers wanted to try and pinpoint when, and how, these emerged. The researchers used data from

a study which followed people from when they were aged 15 in 1987 until their mid-30s, to assess how social class affected physical and mental health and how health affected socio-economic position

Dr Helen Sweeting, co-author of the paper, says: "While it may seem somewhat obvious that [mental health issues](#) in early adulthood can affect a person's later life chances, these results help strengthen the case for greater support to more vulnerable young adults as they make that leap into the world of work, and new responsibilities.

"We found that while very few [young people](#) in the study reported physical health problems, many more reported mental health symptoms.

Health inequalities were resented by people's mid-30s, with those in lower social class jobs or unemployed more likely to report both physical and [mental health](#) problems."

The paper, entitled 'The emergence of health inequalities in [early adulthood](#): evidence on timing and mechanisms from a West of Scotland cohort', was completed with funding from the UK Medical Research Council.

**More information:** Helen Sweeting et al. The emergence of health inequalities in early adulthood: evidence on timing and mechanisms from a West of Scotland cohort, *BMC Public Health* (2016). [DOI: 10.1186/s12889-015-2674-5](#)

Provided by University of Glasgow

Citation: Research shows link between young people's mental health and future inequality (2016, January 26) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-01-link-young->

[people-mental-health.html](#)

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.