

# For poorer Americans, stress brings worse health

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(HealthDay)—In a finding that will surprise few, new research shows

that minorities and the poor suffer more stress than their wealthy, white peers.

That additional psychic burden may translate into poorer mental and physical well-being, and longevity is ultimately affected, the American Psychological Association report suggests.

"Good [health](#) is not equally distributed. Socio-economic status, race and ethnicity affect health status and are associated with substantial disparities in health outcomes across the life span," said report committee chair Elizabeth Brondolo. "And stress is one of the top 10 social determinants of [health inequities](#)."

In the United States, illnesses and injuries associated with stress are estimated to cost more than \$300 billion annually. This includes losses from absenteeism, employee turnover and lost productivity as well as direct legal, medical and insurance fees, the report authors explained.

They noted that people with lower incomes report more severe stress and tend to face more traumatic events during childhood. Black and Hispanic people also report more stress than whites, partly due to discrimination and greater exposure to violence.

"Stress affects how we perceive and react to the outside world," Brondolo said in a psychological association news release. She is a professor of psychology at St. John's University in New York City.

"Low socioeconomic status has been associated with negative thinking about oneself and the outside world, including low self-esteem, distrust of the intentions of others and the perceptions that the world is a threatening place and life has little meaning," Brondolo added. "Stress is also known to contribute to depression."

Not only that, but stress is also associated with unhealthy lifestyle habits, such as smoking, drinking, drug use and inactivity. This can contribute to the development of diabetes, cancer, heart disease and age-related mental decline, the [report](#) authors pointed out.

They argued that strategies to ease the effects of stress on minorities and the poor could help reduce these [health disparities](#). Individuals could be encouraged to engage in yoga and meditation. Other strategies may include improving communication between doctors and their patients and promoting healthier relationships between parents and their children, they added.

"Disparities in both [stress](#) and health may not be visible to those who have more advantages or who have relatively limited direct contact with those affected," Brondolo noted. "A well-informed community is critical to improving the health of racial/ethnic and poor communities."

**More information:** A copy of the report is available online at [www.apa.org/pi/health-disparities/stress-report.pdf](http://www.apa.org/pi/health-disparities/stress-report.pdf)

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides more information on [health disparities and inequalities](#).

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