

High inflation creates stress in lower socioeconomic groups, exacerbating health inequities, suggests study

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High inflation rates are stressing certain sociodemographic groups more than others, exacerbating inequalities in health in the United States, found a new study led by a York University researcher.

Stress is known to have detrimental effects on health and high inflation has become a significant source of stress. Of the 93 percent of respondents who reported an increase in prices for goods and services in their area, 47 percent of them said the rise in prices was very stressful, 28 percent felt moderately stressed, while 19 percent reported feeling a little stress. Less than six percent said increased prices were not stressful to them.

Inflation stress, however, affects various segments of the population differently.

"Inflation does not affect everyone equally and can have a greater impact on people depending on their gender, race, age, [marital status](#), education and [income](#)," says lead author York University Assistant Professor Cary Wu of the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies.

Although the study looked at the effects of high inflation in the U.S., research on Canadians by Wu has found similar patterns.

To measure high inflation stress, the researchers analyzed data from the U.S. Household Pulse Survey. Of the 369,328 respondents, 62 percent were white, 11 percent were Black, five percent were Asian and 17 percent were Hispanic, while 51 percent were women and 31 percent had [post-secondary education](#).

The study found inflation is a significant source of stress for women, much more so than men, as well as those who are socioeconomically more vulnerable. Black and Hispanic people reporter higher inflation stress than [white people](#), while Asians reporter lower inflation stress.

Education and income also play a role with higher levels of both being associated with lower inflation stress. Some 66 percent of those who reported less than \$25,000 in household income felt stressed, while only 17 percent of those with a [household income](#) more than \$200,000 reported feeling stress about high inflation.

After adjusting [socioeconomic status](#), the difference in stress disappeared between Blacks and whites, but Asians showed slightly higher inflation stress.

Previously married individuals who are now widowed, divorced or separated had higher levels of inflation stress than married couples. It was also found to be higher for middle-aged groups compared to those older and younger.

"There is a need for more research and better policies to help protect against the health disparities caused by high inflation stress that affects certain segments of the population more than others," says Wu.

The study, Assessment of sociodemographics and [inflation](#)-related [stress](#) in the US, was published today in the American Medical Association's open access journal *JAMA Network Open*.

More information: Cary Wu et al, Assessment of Sociodemographics and Inflation-Related Stress in the US, *JAMA Network Open* (2023).
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Provided by York University

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