

Income Inequality in Health at all Ages: A Comparison of the United States and England

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Abstract

Objectives. To systematically examine income gradients in health in the United States and England across the life span (ages from 0 to 80 years), separately for females and males, for a number of health conditions.

Methods. Using data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey for the United States (n=39849) and the Health Survey for England (n=69084), weighted prevalence rates and risk ratios are calculated by income level for the following health risk factors or conditions: obesity, hypertension, diabetes, low high-density lipoprotein cholesterol, high cholesterol ratio, heart attack or angina, stroke, and asthma.

Results. The income gradients in health are very similar in the United States and England across age, gender, and numerous health conditions. In both countries these income gradients are robust to adjustments for race/ethnicity, health behaviors, body mass index (BMI), and health insurance.

Conclusions. Health disparities by income are pervasive in England, as well as in the United States, despite better overall health, universal health insurance, and more generous social protection spending in England.