

Health Inequities Fact Sheet

- The U.S. spends more than twice per person on health care than any other industrialized countries. Yet American life expectancy ranks 29th in the world; infant mortality 31st (2007 UN Human Development Report; CIA World Factbook, Nov. 15, 2007).
- It's not top executives who are dropping dead of heart attacks but their subordinates (Marmot et al., 1984, 1991).
- The O'odham Indians of southern Arizona have among the highest diabetes rates in the world. But cross the border and their Mexican O'odham brethren are doing fine (Schulz et al., 2006).
- African American males living in Washington, D.C. have a lower life expectancy (57.9 years) than men living in Bangladesh (58.1) and Ghana (58.3).
- Lost productivity due to chronic disease costs American businesses more than \$1 trillion a year (Milken Institute, 2007).
- Levels of illness for U.S. adults with low income and education in their 30s and 40s are comparable to those of affluent adults in their 60s and 70s (House et al., 1994).
- A baby born to a mother with a high-school education is 1.5 times more likely to die before age one than a baby born to a mother with at least some college-level education (Health United States, 2005).
- White infants born to women who did not complete high school are 80% more likely to die before their first birthday than those born to women with a college degree (Pamuk et al. in Health United States, 1998).
- But, babies born to African American women with a college degree still die before their first birthday at greater rates than those born to white women who haven't finished high school (Pamuk et al. in Health United States, 1998).
- Babies born to African immigrants to the United States have birth weights similar to white Americans. But babies born to their children (now African Americans) are on average half a pound smaller.
- Children living in poverty are 6 times more likely to have poor health than children living in middle or high-income households (Health United States, 2005).
- 21.9% of U.S. children live in poverty, far and away the worst in the industrialized world. Comparable figures for the Nordic countries are 4.2% and less (Innocenti Report Card #6, UNICEF, 2005).

- The top 1% of Americans now possess more wealth than the bottom 90% combined. That's the greatest income inequality since the 1920s (Woolf, 2007).
- The average net worth of white Americans is 10 times that of African Americans, nine times that of Hispanics (U.S. Census, 2003).
- Adults who have not finished high school are almost two times more likely than college graduates to be obese (Health US 2005).
- Non-elderly adults who are poor are seven times more likely to be unable to work due to a health problem, compared with those who are not low income (Health United States, 2005).
- Based on 72 years of data, Hollywood actors who won an Academy Award lived, on average, four years longer than those who were nominated but didn't win (Redelmeier & Singh, 2001).
- The impact of poverty on the overall death rate is comparable to that of cigarette smoking (Hahn et al., 1995).

Former U.S. Surgeon General Dr. David Satcher and his colleagues calculated that in 2002, 83,570 African Americans died who would not have died if Black-white differences in health did not exist - a rate of 229 "excess deaths" per day. That's the equivalent of a Boeing 767 being shot out of the sky and killing everyone on board every day, 365 days a year, points out David Williams of Harvard's School of Public Health. And they are all Black.