

INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY

Soc 1101: Summer 2023

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Health & Social Context

Lecture 22

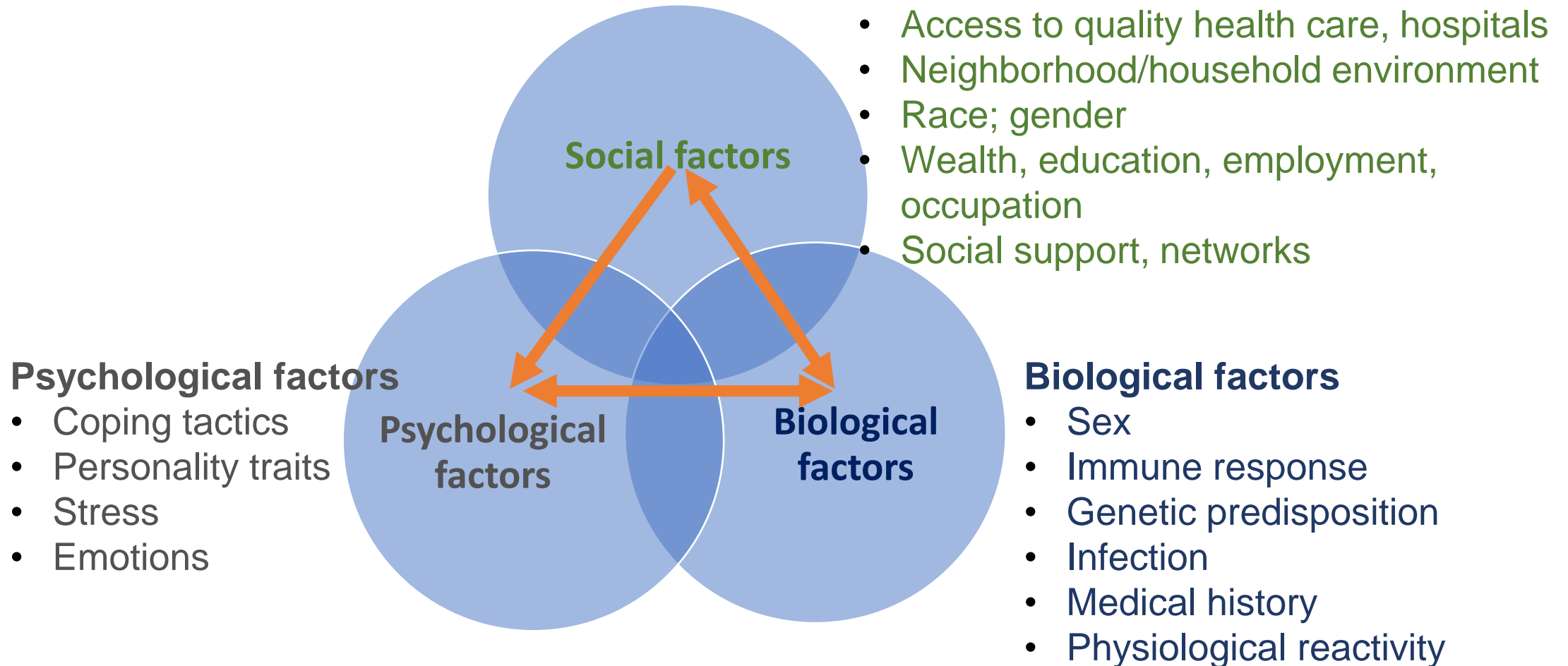
TODAY'S LECTURE OUTLINE

- **What does it mean to be healthy?**
- **Social determinants of health**
 - **Class, race, gender**
 - **Social connections**
- **Sociology of the body**
- **Health and economics**
- **Next lecture: AI, genetics, and reflexivity**

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE HEALTHY?

- **“Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” – World Health Organization (1948)**
- **“Health span” constitutes measures of physical, cognitive, and emotional health.— Attia, author of *Outlive: The Science and Art of Longevity* 2023**
- **Medical sociology focuses on the social contexts of health, illness and health care**

BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL MODEL OF HEALTH



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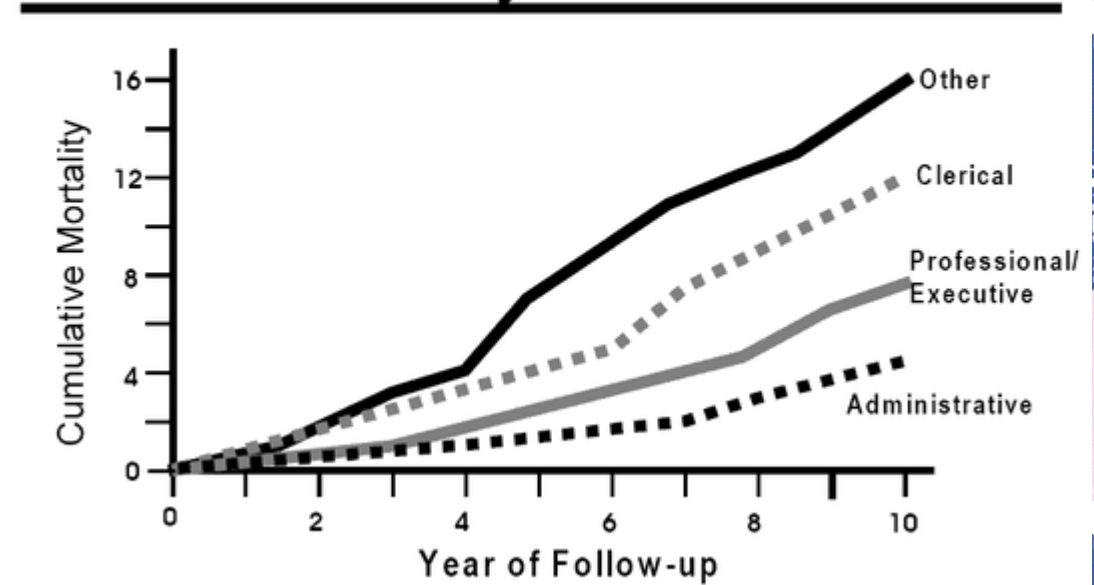
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SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

- **Whitehall Study (1967)**
 - **British study of health among men in civil service positions by job rank**

Finding suggest the social stress resulting from lower rank in the hierarchy led to poorer health outcomes for those at the bottom

U.K. CIVIL SERVICE
Mortality - All Causes



SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

- **Who you are, where you live, how much you earn, and what you do for a living all play a major role in determining your health**

SOCIAL PATTERNING OF HEALTH

- **Social groups with more status, prestige, power and economic resources typically have better health**
 - **Gaps exist by class (SES)**
 - **Gaps exist by race**
- **Differences exist by gender**

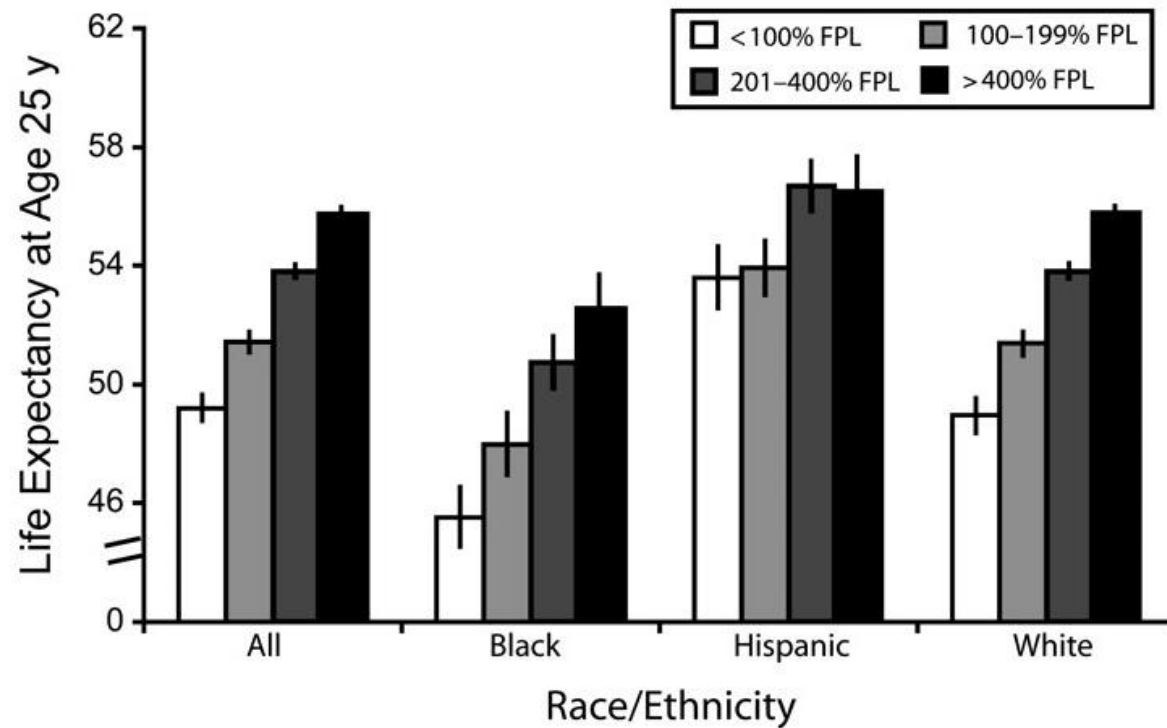
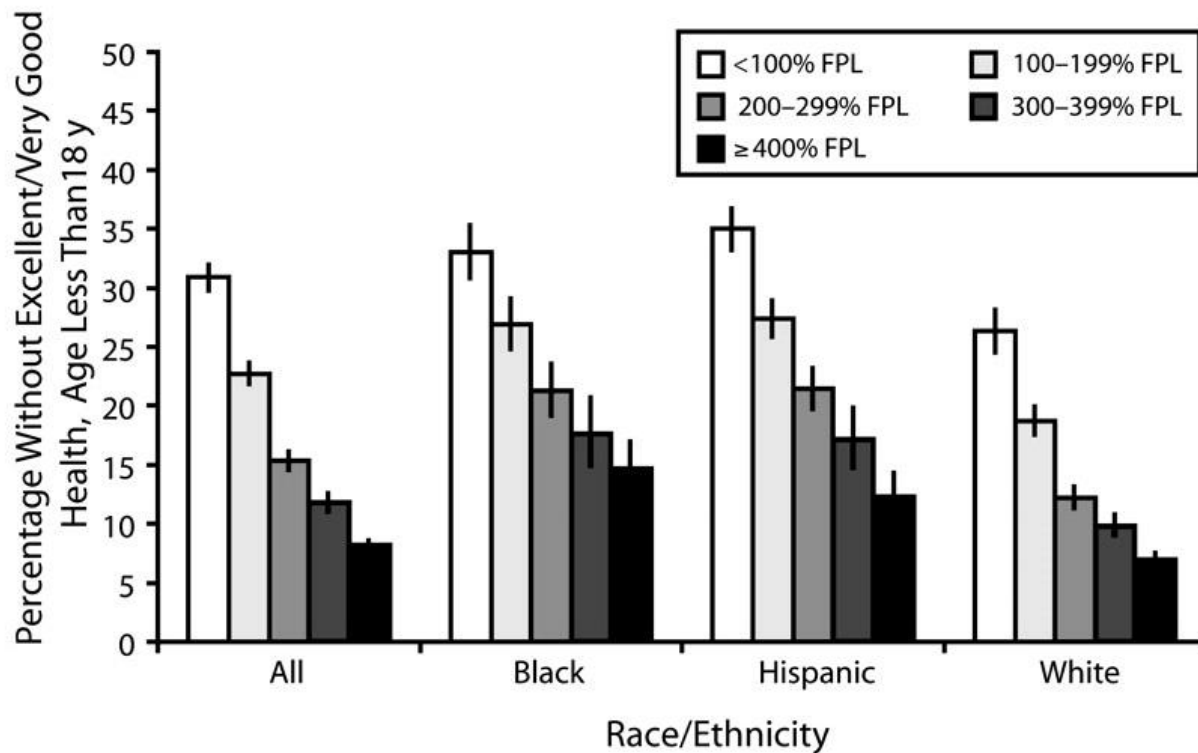


SOCIAL GRADIENT OF HEALTH

- **In the US, child and adult poor health follows a gradient pattern**
- **Step-wise improvements in health can be seen at each increase in SES**

[100% poverty level for family of 4 in 2009 22,050; 200% 44,100; 400+ the poverty level = \$88,200]

FPL: federal poverty level

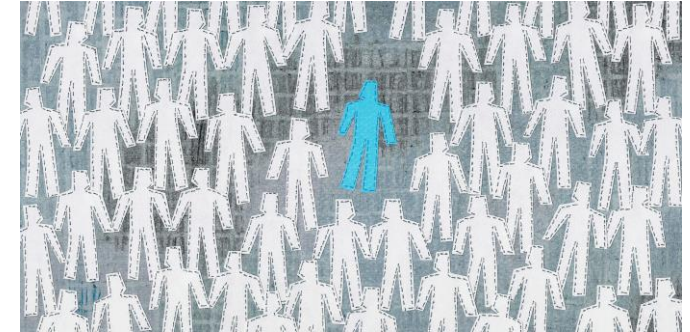


RACIAL DISPARITIES IN HEALTH

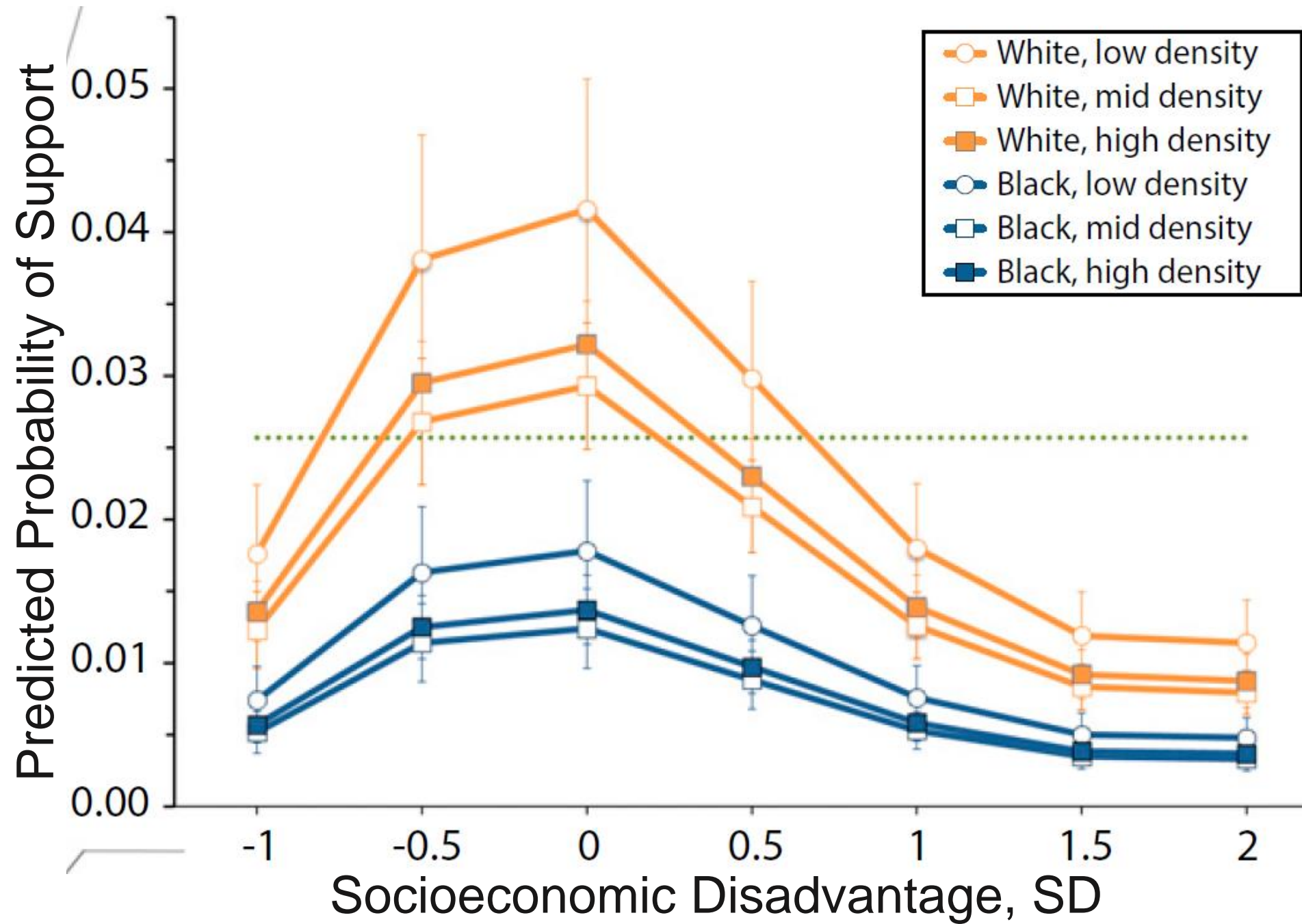
- **Race also matters for health**
 - **Blacks have lower life expectancy, higher infant mortality rates, greater likelihood of other illnesses**
 - **Many blacks live in poor urban areas which lack access to high-quality grocery stores (food deserts)**
 - **Racial minorities perceive more discrimination and report higher levels of distress**

INEQUALITY IN WHO GETS MEDICAL HELP

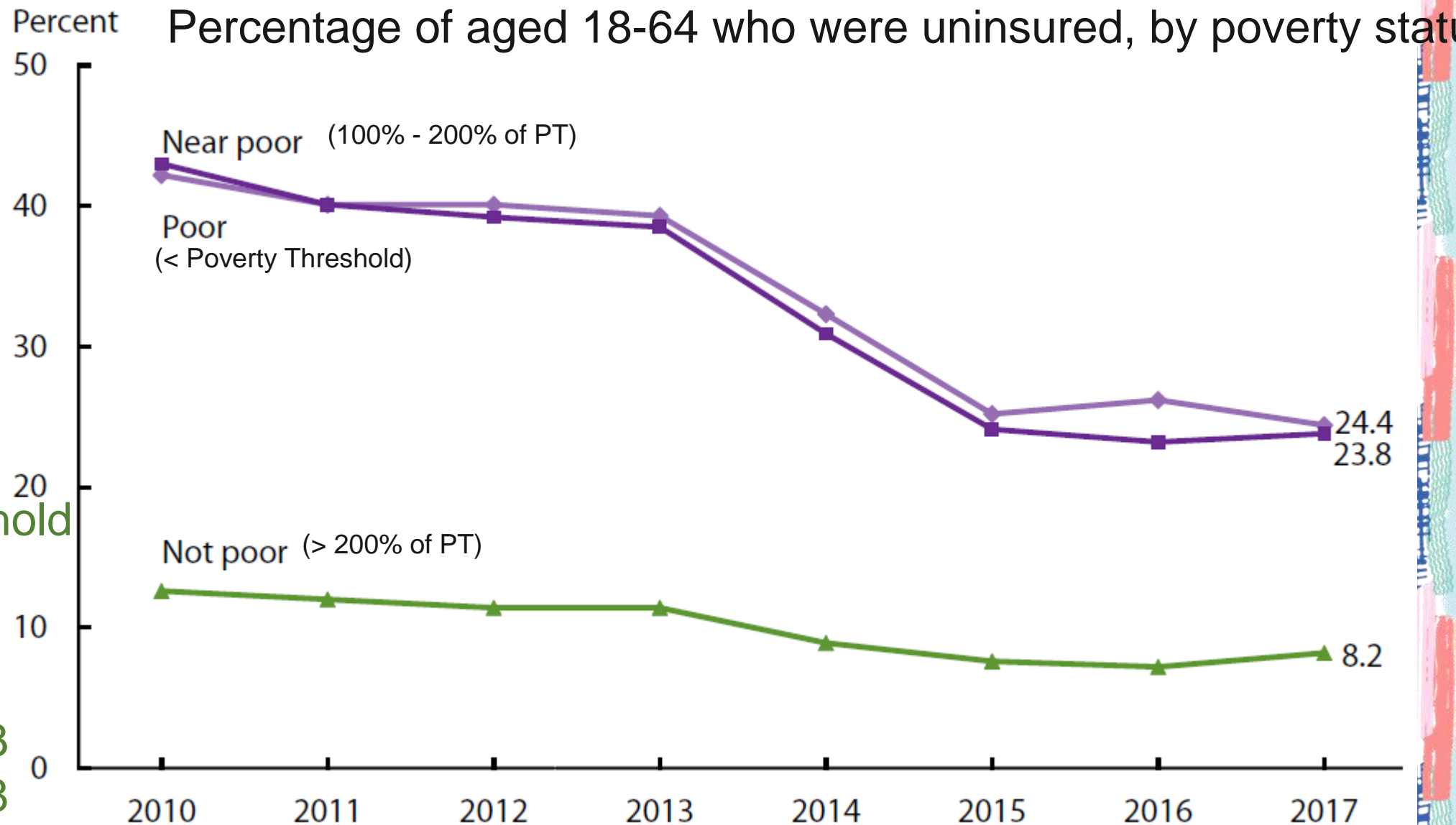
Bystander help in medical emergencies is often life saving



- **However there are disparities in who we decide to help among those in need**



SES and Access to Healthcare: Interpret & Explain




Poverty threshold
2 adults
2 children

2010: \$22,113
2017: \$24,858


GAINS IN HEALTH DISPARITIES

THE **AFFORDABLE CARE ACT** IN 2010 WAS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT PIECE OF LEGISLATION TO **REDUCE HEALTH DISPARITIES** SINCE **MEDICARE AND MEDICAID**, ACCORDING TO DR. NADINE GRACIA, DIRECTOR OF THE FEDERAL HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES' OFFICE OF MINORITY HEALTH.


CHANGES SINCE THE START OF THE FIRST OPEN ENROLLMENT PERIOD INCLUDE:



16.4 MILLION
UNINSURED PEOPLE
GAINED COVERAGE



4.2 MILLION
HISPANICS
GAINED COVERAGE



2.3 MILLION
AFRICAN-AMERICANS
GAINED COVERAGE

THE **UNINSURED** RATE FOR
AFRICAN-AMERICANS **DECLINED** BY



41 PERCENT

THE **UNINSURED** RATE FOR
HISPANICS **DECLINED** BY

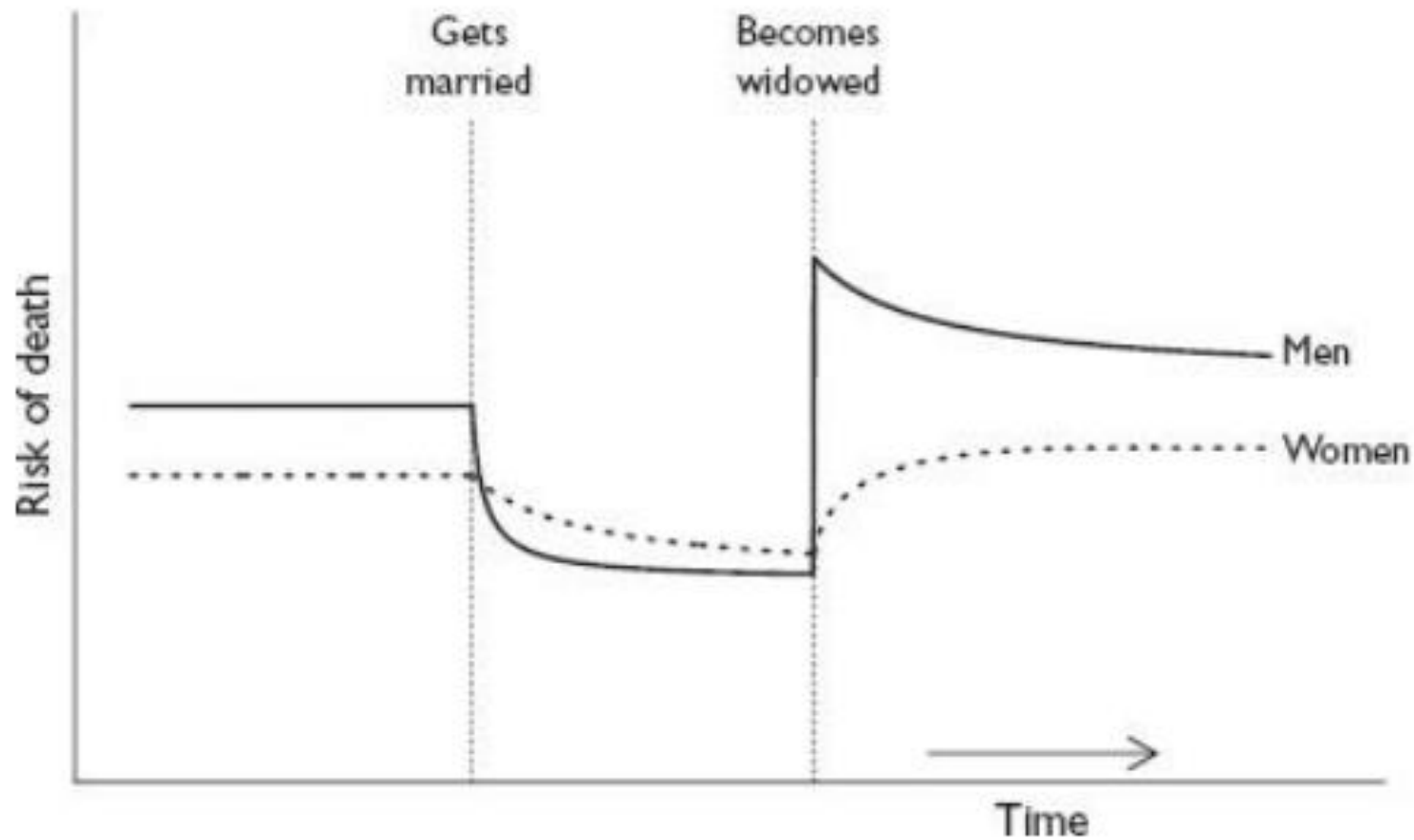


29 PERCENT

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN HEALTH

- **Gender has implications for health**
 - **Women live longer than men (81.2 to 76.4 years)**
 - **Biological factors (estrogen;immune systems)**
 - **Social explanations are behavioral**
 - **men more likely to drink, smoke, adopt risky lifestyle**
 - **less likely to practice preventative health behaviors**
- **However, women are more likely to report poor physical and mental health over lifetime**

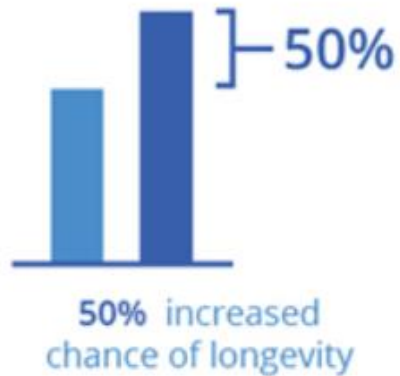
MARRIAGE BENEFITS MEN MORE THAN WOMEN



SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS AND HEALTH

Lack of social connection is a greater detriment to health than obesity, smoking and high blood pressure! (House et al. 1988 *Science*)

THE BENEFITS OF HIGH SOCIAL CONNECTION:



stronger gene expression for immunity (research by Steve Cole, UCLA)

lower rates of anxiety and depression

higher self-esteem and empathy

better emotion regulation skills

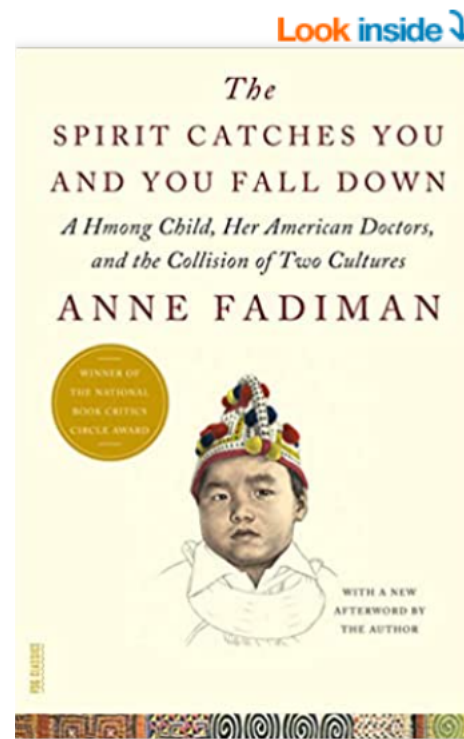
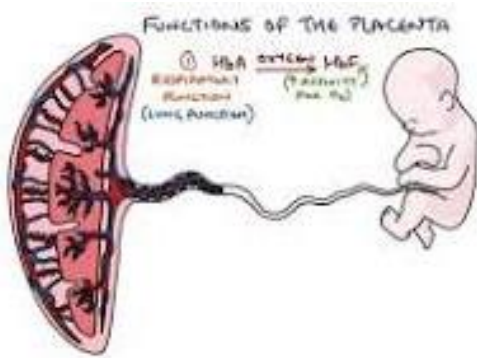
Social connection creates a positive feedback loop of social, emotional, and physical well being.

Social connectedness \neq Must have many friends!

SOCIOLOGY OF THE BODY

- **Focuses on how our bodies are affected by social influences**
- **Attitudes, understandings, and experiences around health and illness are shaped by social, historical and cultural contexts**
 - **Recall articles we read for previous lectures (2 examples!)**

How culture underpins medical knowledge, beliefs, practices, and physical outcomes



The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures (FSG Classics) by Anne Fadiman (2012-04-24)

Paperback – April 24, 2012

by Anne Fadiman (Author)

4.6 ★★★★★ 5,601 ratings

4.2 on Goodreads 79,735 ratings

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HEALTH ECONOMICS: Good Times Make You Sick

Healthy living in hard times

[C.J. Ruhm](#) - *Journal of health economics*, 2005 - Elsevier 


Using microdata for adults from 1987 to 2000 years of the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), I show that smoking and excess weight decline during temporary ...

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Are recessions good for your health?

[C.J. Ruhm](#) - *The Quarterly journal of economics*, 2000 - academic.oup.com 

This study investigates the relationship between economic conditions and **health**. Total mortality and eight of the ten sources of fatalities examined are shown to exhibit a procyclical ...

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Good times make you sick

[C.J. Ruhm](#) - *Journal of health economics*, 2003 - Elsevier 

This study uses microdata from the 1972–1981 National Health Interview Survey to examine how health status and medical care utilization fluctuate with state ...

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Virginia Professor
of Public Policy &
Economics

Increasing mortality during the expansions of the US economy, 1900–1996

[José A Tapia Granados](#)

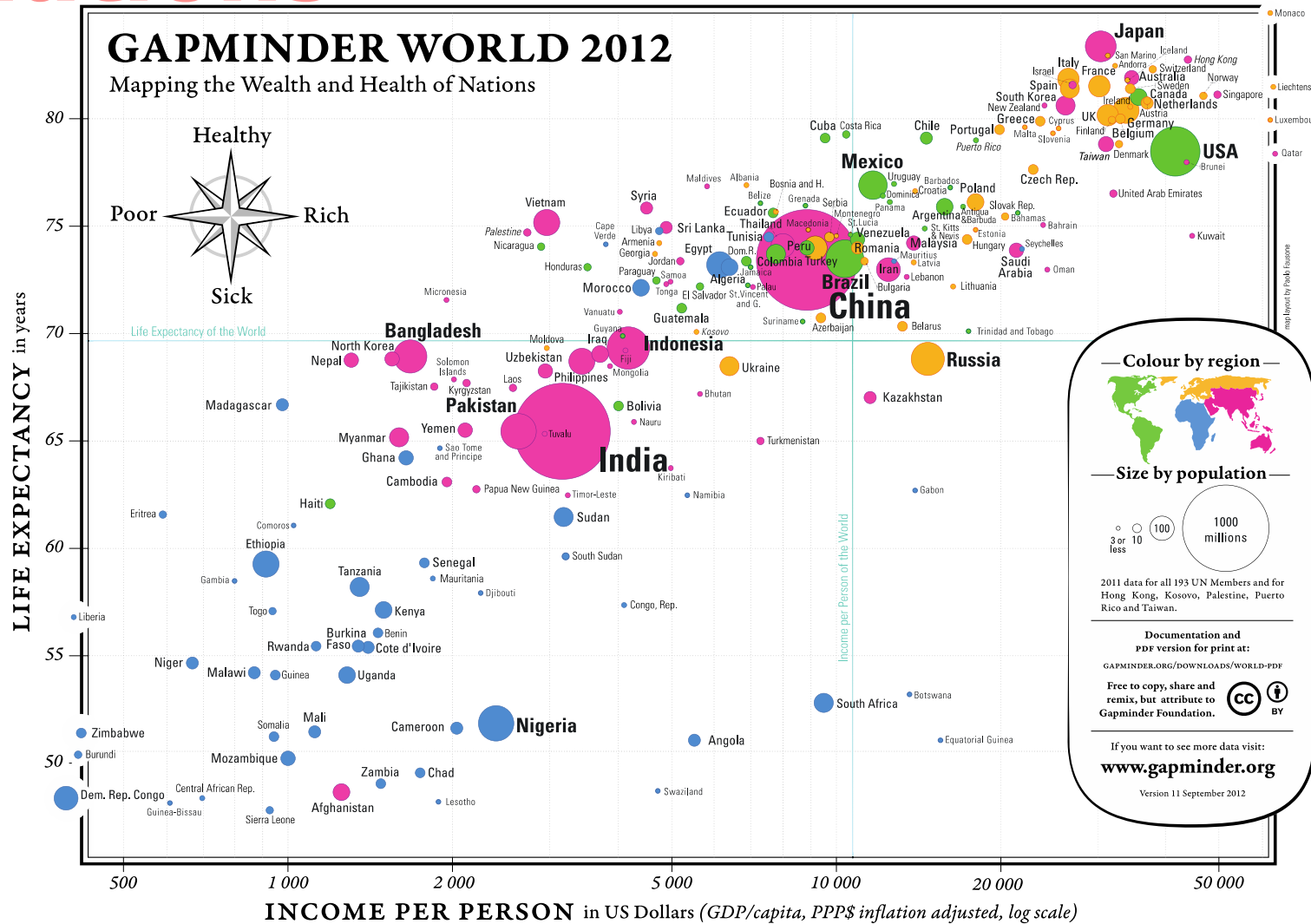
International Journal of Epidemiology, Volume 34, Issue 6, December 2005, Pages 1194–1202, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ije/dyi141>

Published: 28 July 2005 [Article history](#) ▼

WHY GOOD TIMES MAKE YOU SICK

- **Injury-related mortality (traffic, (im)migrants)**
- **Less healthy lifestyle**
 - **Less exercise/physical activity**
 - **Increased consumption of tobacco, alcohol**
 - **Less healthy diet**
- **Decreased immunity levels**
 - **Rising stress**
 - **reduced sleep time**
 - **less social interaction**
- **Important exception:**
 - **Recession, unemployment & suicide**

Long-term trends vs short-term fluctuations



BBC FOUR



LAST LECTURE

- **AI, Genetics, and Reflexivity**

