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APS MENTAL HEALTH SERIES:
FROM RESISTANCE TO RESILIENCE

SOCIO- ECONOMICS & TRAUMA

What is socioeconomic status (SES)?

Socioeconomic status is the “social standing or class of an individual or group. It is often measured as a combination of education, income, and occupation.” ⁽¹⁾ It can be comprised of quality of life factors as well as opportunities and privileges given to people in society.

What is the effect of SES on society?

Socioeconomic status can affect access to resources. Low SES correlates with poverty, lower levels of educational achievement, and poor health. In society this can be seen in inequities of resource distribution, health status, and quality of life. ⁽¹⁾

The effects of SES often intersect with additional social constructs including, but not limited to, race or ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, and ability status. ⁽²⁾

How does SES impact mental health?

Health is partially determined by access to social and economic opportunities that are collectively known as Social Determinants of Health. For example, poverty limits access to healthy foods which can have an impact on health. ⁽³⁾

According to the World Health Organization, “Risk factors for many common mental disorders are heavily associated with social inequalities, whereby the greater the inequality the higher the inequality in risk.” ⁽⁴⁾

Low socioeconomic status is considered a risk factor for mental illness. Studies have shown that socioeconomically disadvantaged children and adolescents are two to three times more likely to develop mental health problems. ⁽⁵⁾

Despite a higher need for mental health services, families experiencing poverty are least likely to have access to high-quality mental health care. For example, it is estimated that fewer than 15% of children experiencing poverty and needing mental health care receive services. ⁽⁶⁾

DATA

National Data

Serious mental illness and poverty

“According to the National Survey of Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), an estimated 9.8 million adults aged 18 or older in the U.S. had a serious mental illness (SMI), including 2.5 million adults living below the poverty line. SMI is defined in NSDUH as adults who in the past year have had a diagnosable mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder (excluding developmental and substance use disorders) of sufficient duration to meet diagnostic criteria and has resulted in serious functional impairment substantially interferes with major life activities. Adults aged 26 or older living below the poverty line were more likely to experience SMI than those living at and above the poverty line (7.5 percent vs. 4.1 and 3.1 percent, respectively).” ⁽⁷⁾

Mental health services and poverty

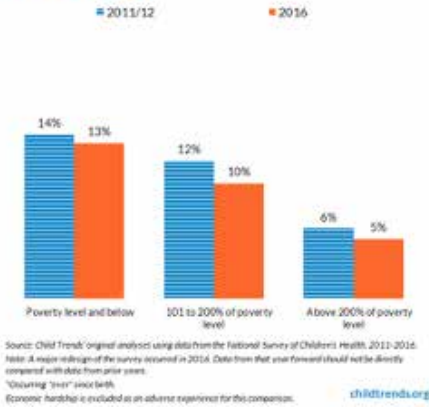
“Every year, about 5 million adults have an unmet need for mental health care and do not receive mental health services. According to the 2009 to 2011 National Surveys on Drug Use and Health (NSDUHs), cost/insurance issues (e.g., not being able to afford care or lacking insurance coverage) were the most frequently mentioned reasons for not receiving mental health services (50.6 percent).” ⁽⁸⁾

SES and ACEs

“Poor children and near-poor children are more than twice as likely than their more affluent peers to have had three or more other adverse experiences. In 2016, 13 percent of children living at the poverty level or below had three or more adverse experiences, compared to 10 percent among children with family incomes from 101 to 200 percent of the poverty level, and 5 percent among children from households with incomes more than twice the poverty level. Similarly, among children at poverty level or below, 51 percent had no adverse

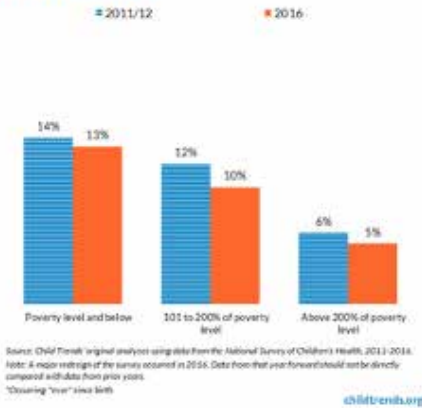
experiences, compared to 59 percent among children with family incomes from 101 to 200 percent of the poverty level, and 73 percent among children living in higher-income households, in 2016.”⁽⁹⁾

Percentage of Children with Three or More Adverse Experiences,* by Poverty Level: 2011/12 and 2016



“In 2016, 9 percent of children and youth who had a parent with schooling beyond high school had three or more adverse experiences. This compares to 15 and 13 percent, respectively, among children whose parents completed high school only, and those whose parents did not finish high school. Similarly, children whose parents have education beyond high school are more likely than their peers with less-educated parents to have no adverse experiences. In 2016, among children who had a parent with schooling beyond high school, 61 percent had no adverse experiences, compared to 43 percent both among children whose parents completed high school only, and among children whose parents lacked a high school education.”⁽⁹⁾

Percentage of Children with Three or More Adverse Experiences,^a by Parental Education: 2011/12 and 2016



Regional Data

The Kansas and Missouri Consumer Health Access Survey in 2017 found that 24% of Kansans and 25% of Missouri residents age 19-64 report family income under the 137% of the Federal Poverty Level. Among those with income under the poverty level: 34% of Kansas respondents 61% of Missouri respondents with mental health diagnoses or addiction reported they did not get needed care in the past year. ⁽¹⁰⁾

Local Data

In a six county area – Wyandotte, KS, Johnson, KS, Allen, KS, Jackson, MO, Cass, MO, Lafayette, MO

“Nearly 40 percent of low-income adults (below 138 percent of the federal poverty level) reported a diagnosed mental health condition or addiction, compared with 29 percent of adults with higher income. One in five did not see a mental health professional and had a diagnosed condition.” ⁽¹¹⁾

“Mental health conditions and addiction are underdiagnosed and undertreated, especially for people of color. A very low percentage of black/African American and Hispanic/Latino residents, relative to white

non-Hispanic residents, reported a diagnosed mental health condition. Persons of color face a spectrum of barriers to appropriate screening and diagnosis that prevent them from receiving a mental health diagnosis. Access to health professionals is relatively poor for persons of color because of lack of insurance, low ability to pay out-of-pocket, and distance to providers. People of color also face higher stigma around mental illness and seeking care for mental health problems, resulting in underdiagnosis and undertreatment.” ⁽¹¹⁾

Resources for further information

HealthyPeople.gov – Social Determinants of Health

<https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/social-determinants-of-health>

HealthyPeople.gov – Disparities

<https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/about/foundation-health-measures/Disparities>

World Health Organization – Social Determinants of Mental Health

https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/112828/9789241506809_eng.pdf

Trends in Adverse Childhood Experiences

<https://www.childtrends.org/indicators/adverse-experiences>

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