

Hospitalization Disparities by Socio-Economic Status for Males and Females

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“.....Research, including previous CPHI analyses (Reducing Gaps in Health report, 2008), has demonstrated consistently higher hospitalization rates for people from lower socio-economic areas. New analyses presented in this report expand on those findings by examining the size and cost of disparities in hospitalization rates between socio-economic status groups across Canada's 33 largest cities. Since research has shown the relationship between socio-economic status and health to differ by sex, results are presented separately for males and females.

The foci of the analysis are ambulatory care sensitive conditions and mental illness - conditions for which hospitalization could potentially be avoided with adequate primary health care.

This analysis examines disparities in hospitalization rates across socio-economic groups for Canada's census metropolitan areas.

The analysis builds on previous research that has illustrated hospitalization disparities by socio-economic status in Canada—lower socio-economic groups have consistently higher hospitalization rates.^{1–8} Canadian research also suggests that the relationship between socio-economic status and health differs by sex.^{9, 10}

Research shows there is variability in hospitalization rates that may be the result of differences in access to primary health care, including physician supply.^{11–13}

This analysis focuses on ambulatory care sensitive conditions and mental health, as these are conditions for which hospitalization could potentially be avoided with adequate primary health care.^{14, 15}

This analysis addresses the following research questions: Are there disparities in hospitalization rates across socio-economic groups for both males and females? Do the magnitude and cost of these disparities differ by sex?

Key Findings

Hospitalization disparities across socio-economic groups exist for both sexes for ambulatory care sensitive conditions and mental illness, and they are consistently observed across census metropolitan areas in Canada.

- The magnitude of disparities is generally higher for males than females when measured by excess hospitalization rates.ⁱ
- For both sexes, excess rates associated with socio-economic status account for an estimated 33% to 40% of hospitalization rates.

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