Opportunity, Health and Mortality: A Focus on Young Adults in Ohio

Jocelyn Mineo (jmineo@bgsu.edu)
Department of Sociology
Bowling Green State University

Introduction

• Opportunity varies significantly by community, yet little is known about how opportunity is linked to the health and mortality of Ohio’s young adults.

• This study asks: Is opportunity associated with health behaviors, health outcomes and mortality among Ohio’s young adults?

Data and Methods

• The Opportunity Index (1-100) is defined as the overall potential opportunity for a given county calculated using a series of measures on the health of the economy, educational, and community environment.

• Mortality is measured as deaths per 100,000 population and are age-adjusted to the 2000 U.S. standard population. Data are from the Centers for Disease Control.

• Health Outcomes / Health Behaviors: 2015 Ohio Medicaid Assessment Survey.

• Mental Distress: Impairment in work/usual activities due to mental health for >=14 days.

• Fair/Poor Health: Self reported health.

• Obese: BMI >=30

• Current Smoker: Smokes every/some days.

• Binge Drinking: 5/4 or more drinks on one occasion for men/women at least once in the past month.

• Misuse of Prescription Drugs: using a prescription pain reliever in a way not prescribed by the doctor in the past year.

Results

• Opportunity is closely related to the well-being of Ohio’s young adult population.

• At the county-level, higher levels of opportunity are significantly associated with lower rates of fair/poor health, smoking, and obesity (Figure 3).

• Higher levels of county-level opportunity are associated with a lower risk of mortality among Ohio young adults (Figure 4).

• Drug overdoses account for the highest proportion of deaths among Ohioans ages 15 to 34 (Figure 5).

• The number of unintentional drug deaths among younger adults in Ohio has increased at an alarming rate (Figure 6).

Discussion

• These findings suggest that there is a link between economic opportunity and health and mortality of young adults in Ohio.

• Future research should examine the links between changes in economic opportunity over time and changes in health behaviors.

• Future research should also investigate the underlying causal mechanisms between economic opportunity and health behaviors (in particular, drug use), health outcomes, and mortality among Ohioans.

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