

# Examining the Relationship Between Social Class and Mental Health

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## Research Questions

- Is there a relationship between education, and mental health?
- Does the association vary by gender?

## Significance

- In 2017, an estimated 46.6 million adults aged 18 or older were living with a mental illness in the United States (National Institute of Mental Health, 2017)
- While the benefits still outweigh the costs of college, the gap is decreasing quickly (Abel & Deitz, 2014).

## Background

- Previous studies found that the higher a person's social class, the better their mental health (Muntaner et al., 2007, Muntaner et al, 2015).
- People with higher education have higher incomes and better job conditions (Muntaner et al., 2007).

## Hypotheses

- There will be a negative relationship between education and poor mental health.
- There will be similar results for both men and women.

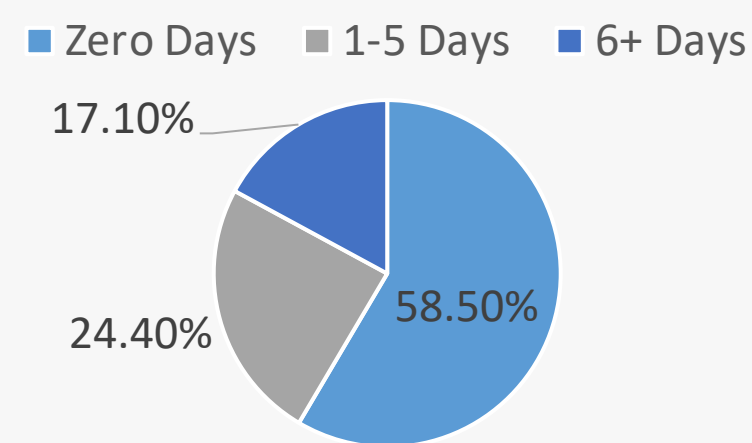
## Data and Sample

- The 2014, 2016, and 2018 General Social Survey (GSS).
- A nationally representative sample of American adults aged 18 and older living in non-institutionalized households in the U.S continent who speak English or Spanish.

## Dependent Variable

- Mental Health Status
- “For how many days during the past 30 days was your mental health not good?”

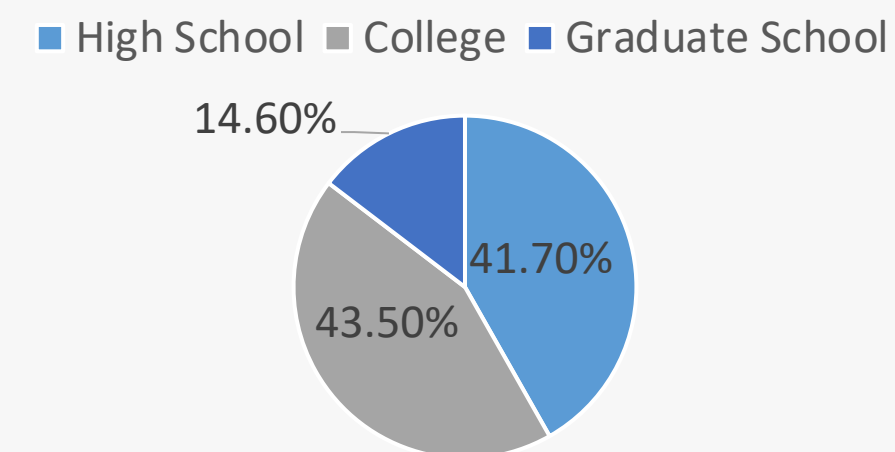
Figure 1. % Distribution of # of Days of Poor Mental Health



## Independent Variable

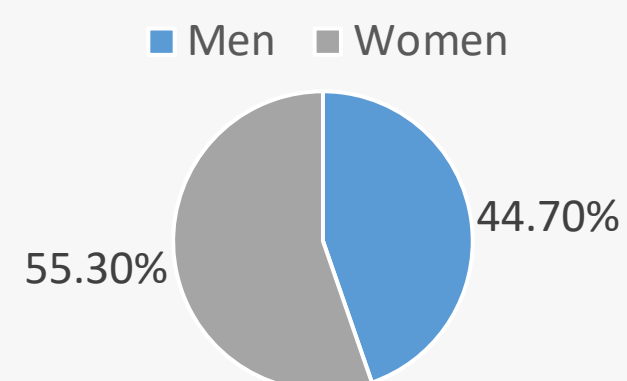
- Education
- “What is the highest year of education you have completed”

Figure 2. % Distribution of Highest Level of Education Completed



## Control Variable

Figure 3. Gender of Respondent



## Analysis

- Crosstabulation and Chi-square tests in SPSS tabulation.

## Results

Figure 4. % Distribution for the Number of Days Respondents Had Poor Mental Health by Education: Total Sample

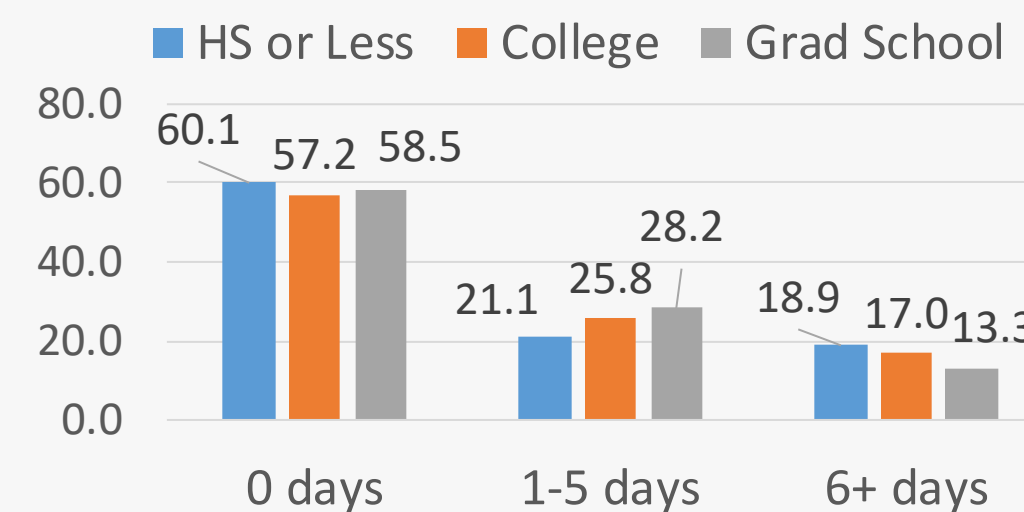


Figure 5. % Distribution for the Number of Days Respondents Had Poor Mental Health by Education: Men

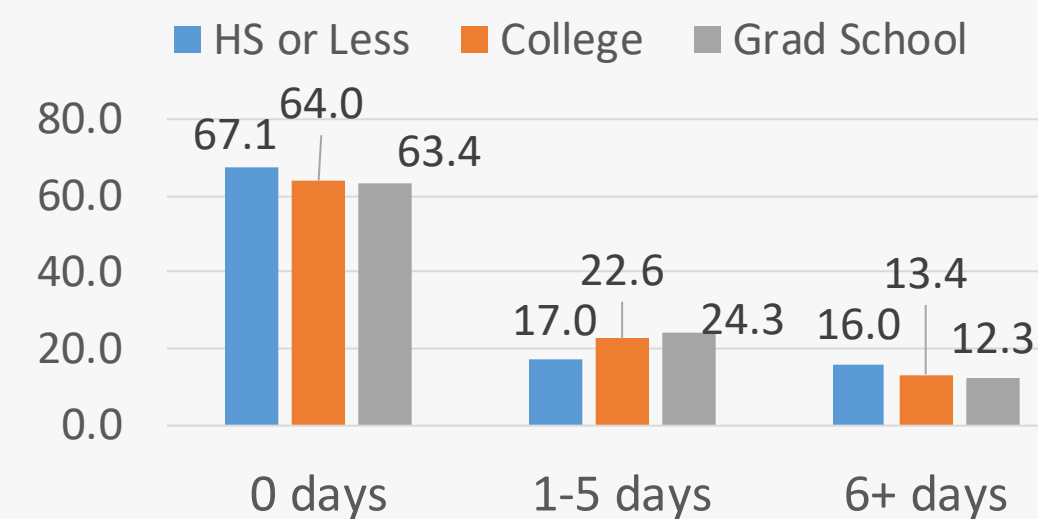
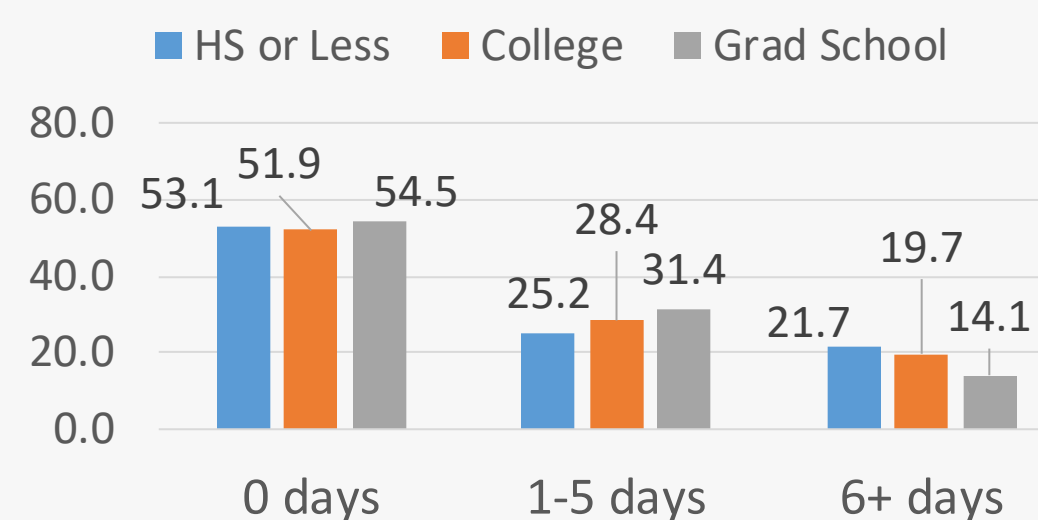


Figure 6. % Distribution for the Number of Days Respondents Had Poor Mental Health by Education: Women



## Chi-Square Tests

- Chi-square tests were significant at  $p < .001$  for the total sample and were significant for both men and women at  $p < .05$ .

## Summary of Findings

- Those with more education are less likely to report having 6 or more days of poor mental health than those with less education, regardless of gender.
- Women are more likely to report more days having poor mental health than men
- Differences in mental health by education level were small.

## Future Research

- Socioeconomic status can also be measured through income and occupation level.
- Moving forward, more research should be done either focusing on one of these aspects, or socioeconomic status as a whole.

## References

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- Muntaner C., Borrell C., Chung H. (2007). Class Relations, Economic Inequality and Mental Health: Why Social Class Matters To the Sociology of Mental Health. In Avison W.R., McLeod J.D., Pescosolido B.A. (eds) *Mental Health, Social Mirror* (pp.127 – 142). Springer, Boston, MA.
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