



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

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## RWJF Report Identifies Link Between Education Level, Health Status

A new study from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) suggests that the education level of U.S. adults directly correlates to their overall health, the *San Antonio Express-News* reports. Using U.S. Census Bureau data and surveys from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, researchers led by a University of California Center on Social Disparities professor compared education levels with the self-reported health status of U.S. adults age 25 to age 74. According to the data, 45.2 percent of all respondents deemed their personal health "less than very good." In addition, the rate of individuals reporting less than favorable health was highest among respondents with the lowest education level. For example, adults holding a high school diploma were twice as likely to report being in less than very good health compared with college graduates. Moreover, adults without a high school diploma were more than 2.5 times as likely to report being in less than very good health. According to the report, Mississippi had the highest rate of adults reporting being in less than very good health, at 52.9 percent, compared with Vermont, which recorded a low of 34.7 percent respondents saying that they were in less than very good health. In addition to health gaps among states, the researchers note that such education gaps varied within states as well. In California, for example, 48 percent of adults reported being in less than very good health, while just 28 percent of college graduates in California reported being in less than very good health, accounting for a nearly 20 percent disparity, the largest gap in the nation. By contrast, 41 percent of all adults in Delaware reported being in less than very good health, while 32 percent of college graduates noted the same, representing the nation's smallest gap of 9 percent. Based on the findings, the researchers conclude that education level is an important predictor of future overall health, leading Mark McClellan, co-chair of RWJF's Commission to Build a Healthier America, to suggest that "one of the most important things we can do for our nation's health is to improve education quality and educational attainment." Moreover, the report also notes that adults in all states, regardless of education level, are not as healthy as they could be. To that end, the researchers identify Vermont as a national benchmark, in particular noting that just 19 percent of Vermont residents who are college graduates who exercise and abstain from tobacco reported less than very good health (Preyor-Johnson, *San Antonio Express-News*, 5/6/09; RWJF [release](#), 5/6/09; RWJF [report](#), May 2009).

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