Reaching for a Healthier Life
Facts on Socioeconomic Status and Health in the U.S.

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Research Network on Socioeconomic Status and Health

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Figure 1. Relative Risk of Premature Death by Family Income (U.S. Population).

*Age and sex-adjusted relative risk of dying prior to age 65. Based on 9-year mortality data from the National Longitudinal Mortality Survey.
Figure 3. Prevalence of Health Problems in Children.
Figure 2. The Dynamic Relationship Between Health and Ladder Position.
Contributors to premature mortality:

- Genetic predisposition: 30%
- Social circumstances: 15%
- Medical care deficiencies: 10%
- Environmental exposures: 5%
- Behavior: 40%

SES related: Contributors to premature mortality

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- Medical care deficiencies: 10%
- Social circumstances: 15%
- Behavior: 40%

Figure 8. Current Cigarette Smoking by Adults Age 25 Years.

Source: Health, United States. 2004 p. 225
Figure 9. Health Insurance Coverage by Income Level, 2004.

Note: The federal poverty level (FPL) was $19,307 for a family of four in 2004.
Figure 12. Life Expectancy at age 25 for U.S. Black and White Men with Similar Income Levels.
Changing ladder

• Universal access to high quality preschool
• Reducing financial barriers to college education
• Minimum wage increases
• Earned income tax credits
• Secure pensions
• Assured job training for downsized workers
Buffering position

- Increase availability of affordable housing
- Zoning that restricts noise and pollution
- Lead abatement enforcement
- Workplace redesign to increase control
- Parental leave to care for sick children
- Improved nutrition of school lunches
- Smoking bans and subsidized treatment
- Access to recreational facilities