

Socioeconomic Determinants of Cardiovascular Disease: A Systematic Review

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Objective: To examine the association between socioeconomic status (SES), encompassing income, educational attainment, and employment status, and the incidence of cardiovascular disease (CVD) in adults.

Methods: Cohort studies were identified from PubMed, Web of Science and UWllinC from 2014 to May 2024 using keywords “educational attainment”, “income”, “employment status”, “cardiovascular disease” and “adult” as well as their synonyms. Articles were screened by title, abstract and subsequently full-text for inclusion by paired reviewers and quality assessed using the Newcastle-Ottawa Scale.

Results: Twenty-five eligible studies were included in this systematic review, assessing the influence of income (32%), educational attainment (28%), employment status (12%), and multiple socioeconomic factors (28%). SES was found to be inversely related to CVD incidence. Low income, low educational attainment and unemployment were shown to be associated with increased prevalence of modifiable CVD risk factors such as smoking, poor diet, physical inactivity, hypertension and diabetes. Low SES was also linked to health-risk behaviours such as decreased health vigilance, delays in seeking medical care, and poor medication compliance. Unemployment exerted the greatest influence on CVD incidence, followed by low educational attainment and low income. Income was a more sensitive predictor of CVD risk in women, while high-risk occupations for heart disease exerted an elevated influence on men.

Conclusions: Low SES is associated with an increased incidence of coronary heart disease, ischemic and hemorrhagic stroke. Consideration of socioeconomic factors may improve long-term CVD disease risk calculation and guide public health interventions.