

Does Financial Insecurity Lead to More Physical Pain?

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Scientific American:

A research team led by public policy Professor Eileen Chou at the University of Virginia hypothesized that the confluence of these two trends – greater economic uncertainty and more physical pain – may not be entirely coincidental. Chou and her colleagues recently published a paper in *Psychological Science* summarizing six studies that demonstrate a direct link between financial insecurity and the experience of physical pain.

The first study looked at a diverse sample of 33,720 American households and found that households in which one or more of the primary adults are unemployed spend more money on painkillers. This finding held steady even after the researchers statistically controlled for other factors that could be linked to the purchase of pain medication, such as the number of people living in the household, total household income, and consumption of cold and flu medications. While suggestive, these findings don't prove that economic insecurity *causes* more pain. To test this hypothesis, the researchers designed experiments where they manipulated people's feelings of economic insecurity.

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