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Gender, Race, Class and Self-Reported Sexually Transmitted Disease Incidence

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Multivariate analysis of data from two nationally representative surveys of adult men and women indicates that the likelihood of a self-reported sexually transmitted disease (STD) infection varies by gender, race and socioeconomic status, even after accounting for differences in sexual and health care behaviors. Women and black respondents are more than three times as likely to report an STD infection as men and white respondents; men and women with 12 or fewer years of education are about 30% less likely than those with more schooling to report having had an STD. Income, welfare status and access to health care have no significant association with self-reported STD incidence, but sexual behavior is strongly related. Men and women who have engaged in anal intercourse, have paid for sex or have had one-night stands are significantly more likely than those who avoid these behaviors to report an STD. Further, the likelihood of an STD dramatically increases with the lifetime number of sex partners reported: Compared with men and women who have had only one partner, those who report 2-3 partners are five times as likely to have had an STD; the odds are as high as 31:1 for those who report 16 or more partners.

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