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Purpose of Study

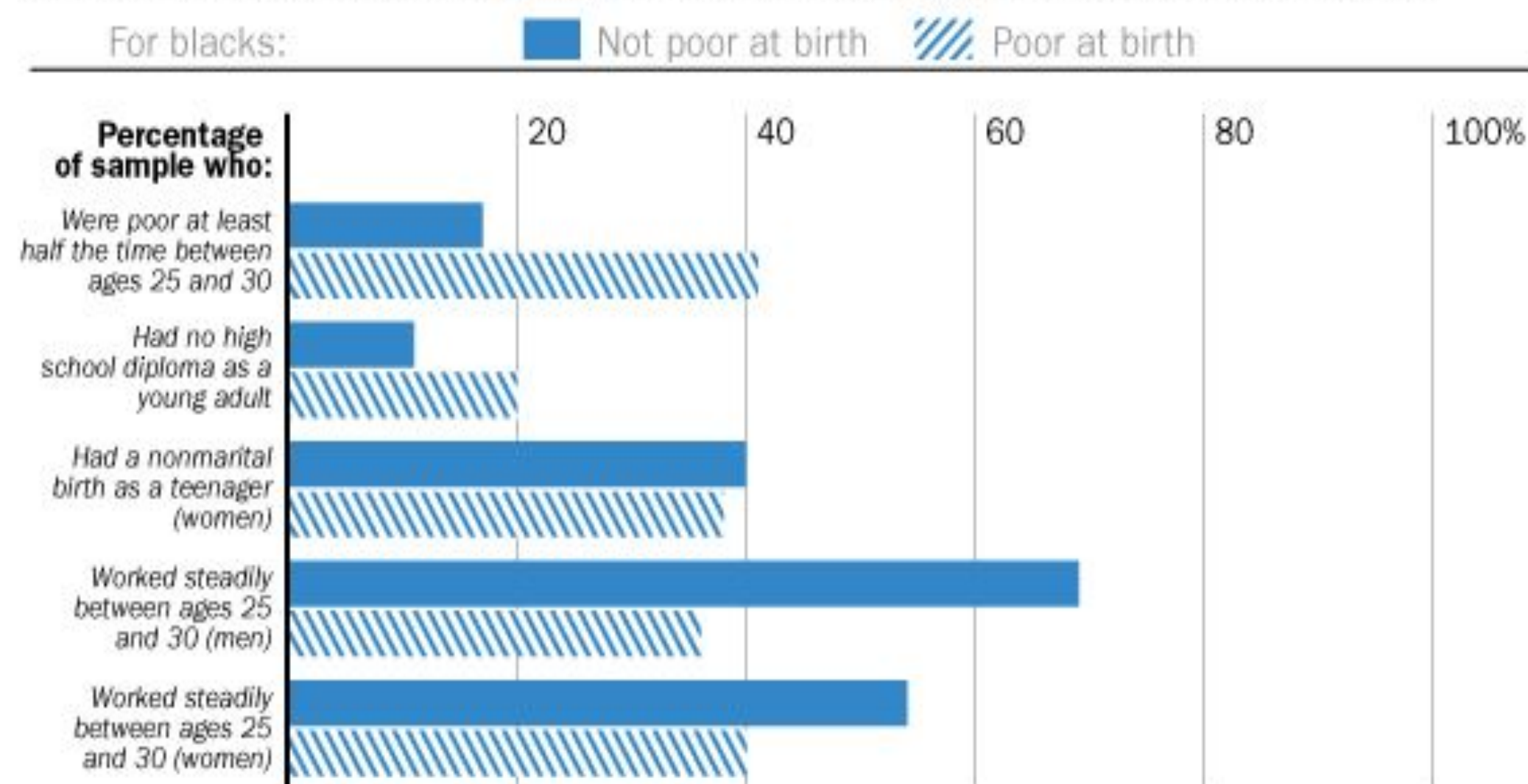
This purpose of this study is to explore how chronic stress affects health outcomes in the African American community.

Introduction

Chronic stress can affect our health in negative ways. The American Psychological Association (APA) says that African Americans are more likely to experience stress because of economic disadvantages and racism. Therefore, chronic stress contributes to health disparities among African Americans.

Born Into Poverty (Blacks)

Outcomes for adults born into poverty, compared to those who weren't. Graphics are based on data for 1,795 people who were observed at every age from birth through age 17.



Source: THE URBAN INSTITUTE

Figure 1. Blacks Born into Poverty.

HOW STRESS AFFECTS THE BODY

BRAIN

Difficulty concentrating, anxiety, depression, irritability, mood, mind fog

CARDIOVASCULAR

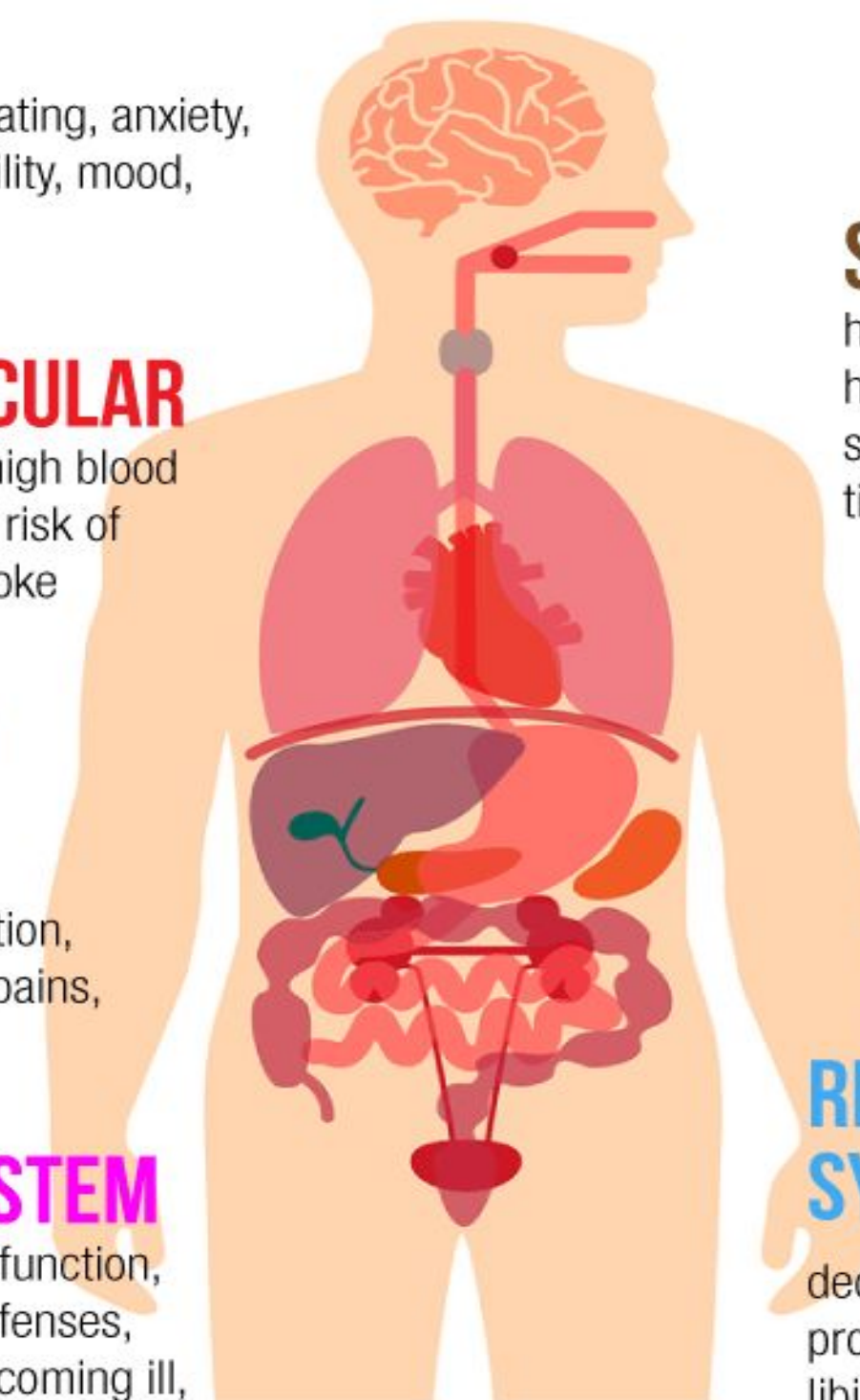
higher cholesterol, high blood pressure, increased risk of heart attack and stroke

JOINTS AND MUSCLES

increased inflammation, tension, aches and pains, muscle tightness

IMMUNE SYSTEM

decreased immune function, lowered immune defenses, increased risk of becoming ill, increase in recovery time



SKIN

hair loss, dull/brittle hair, brittle nails, dry skin, acne, delayed tissue repair

GUT

nutrient absorption, diarrhea, constipation, indigestion, bloating, pain and discomfort

REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM

decreased hormone production, decrease in libido, increase in PMS symptoms

Figure 2. How Stress Affects the Body.

Applications in Medicine

It's important for doctors to teach people how cope with stress in healthy ways:

- Keep a stress diary
- Release feelings
- Exercise
- Smile and laugh with friends
- Get enough sleep
- Meditate

Data

Stress leads to coronary vascular diseases, obesity, diabetes, depression, cognitive impairment and autoimmune disorders. Stress damages the immune system, making it harder for people to fight off diseases or illness. Data shows that all of these ailments affect African Americans more than other groups in the United States.

Conclusion

- African Americans are more likely to experience chronic stress.
- Chronic stress affects our health and immune system and leads some people to smoke or use drugs.
- It's important for people to learn to cope with stress in healthy ways.

References

<http://www.apa.org>
www.nih.gov