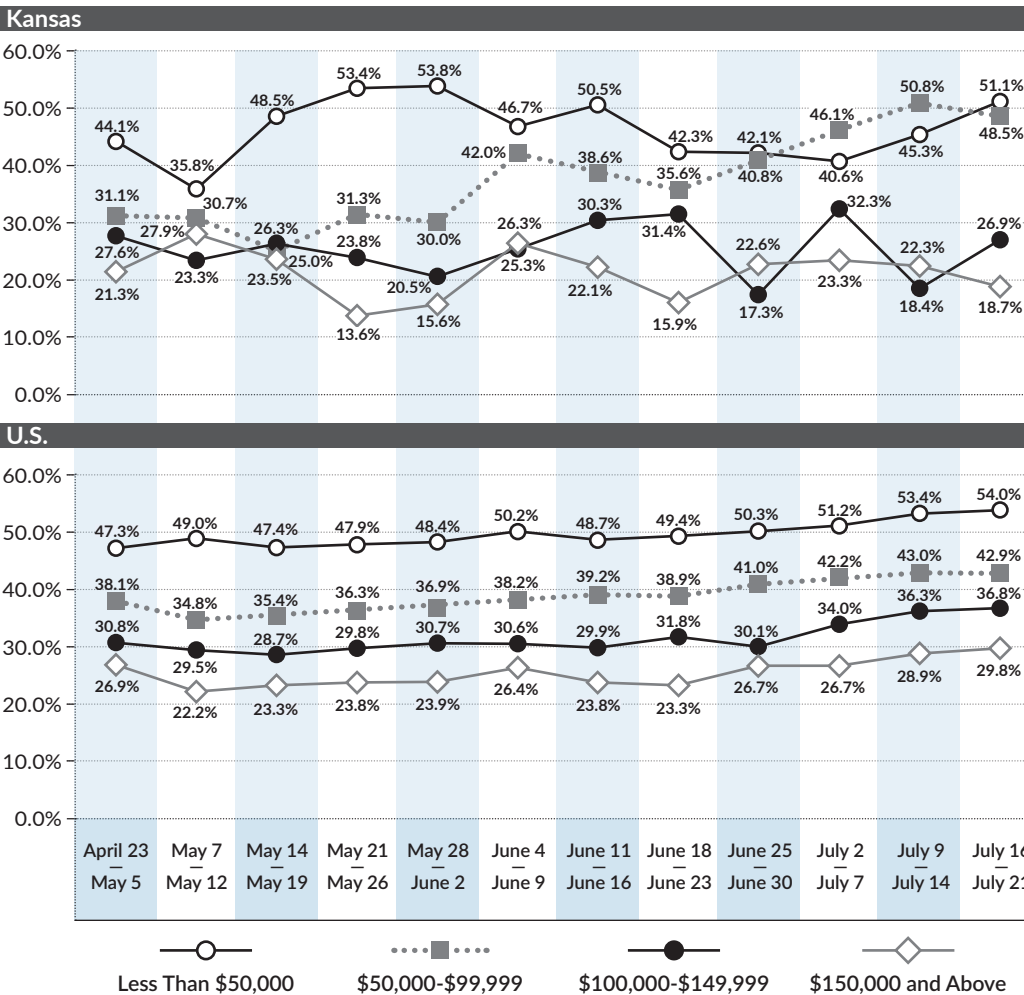


Mental Health During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The stress and mental health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are just beginning to be understood. *Figure 1* shows the frequency of self-reported anxiety or depression symptoms for nonelderly adults in Kansas and the U.S. from April through July, 2020.

Figure 1. Rates of Anxiety or Depression Among Nonelderly Adults Age 19-64, By Income, April-July 2020



Note: Annual income is self-reported from 2019. The questions on anxiety and depression are a modified version of the two-question Patient Health Questionnaire, and the two-question Generalized Anxiety Disorder scale. Source: Kansas Health Institute analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey Public Use File.

Conclusions

Lower income was associated with poorer mental health and the disparity has widened in Kansas during the COVID-19 pandemic. These limited data suggest that stress has increased more for middle income households than low income households, perhaps reflecting the need for middle income families to newly adapt to worsening situations, whereas low income households had already adapted to ongoing stresses. With the health and economic toll of the pandemic continuing well beyond the end of these data in July, there is a greater need than ever for improved access to mental health services and identifying underlying causes of stress that could help develop strategies to assist those in need.

Key Points

- A similar pattern in Kansas and the U.S. shows that lower household income was associated with poorer mental health throughout the pandemic.
- Households in Kansas making less than \$50,000 per year and those making \$50,000-\$99,000 were the most likely to report stress or depression at the end of the survey period (about half in each group reporting stress or depression).
- However, the biggest increase in anxiety or depression over the survey period was among middle-income households (annual income \$50,000-\$99,000). In Kansas, the percent of middle-income households that reported anxiety or depression increased by more than half, from 31.1 percent to 48.5 percent.
- The likelihood of reporting anxiety or depression in households making less than \$50,000 compared to those making more than \$150,000 varied from 1.3 to 3.9 times greater over the course of the survey, and at the end of the survey stood at 2.7 times greater (51.1 percent compared to 18.7 percent).



The Household Pulse Survey is an ongoing federal survey that provides policy makers with valuable near real-time information about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Kansas and across the United States. This valuable resource allows for a deeper, data-driven understanding of the impact that the pandemic is having on our communities. This Pulse on Kansas is one in a series focusing on the economic, social and health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in Kansas.



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The Kansas Health Institute supports effective policymaking through nonpartisan research, education and engagement. KHI believes evidence-based information, objective analysis and civil dialogue enable policy leaders to be champions for a healthier Kansas. Established in 1995 with a multiyear grant from the Kansas Health Foundation, KHI is a nonprofit, nonpartisan educational organization based in Topeka.

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