

Social Determinants of Health

Definition:

The social determinants of health are the circumstances in which people are born, grow up, live, work and age, and the systems put in place to deal with illness. These circumstances are in turn shaped by a wider set of forces: economics, social policies, and politics.

World Health Organization: <https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/social-determinants-of-health-key-concepts>

Causes of Health Inequities at Three Levels:

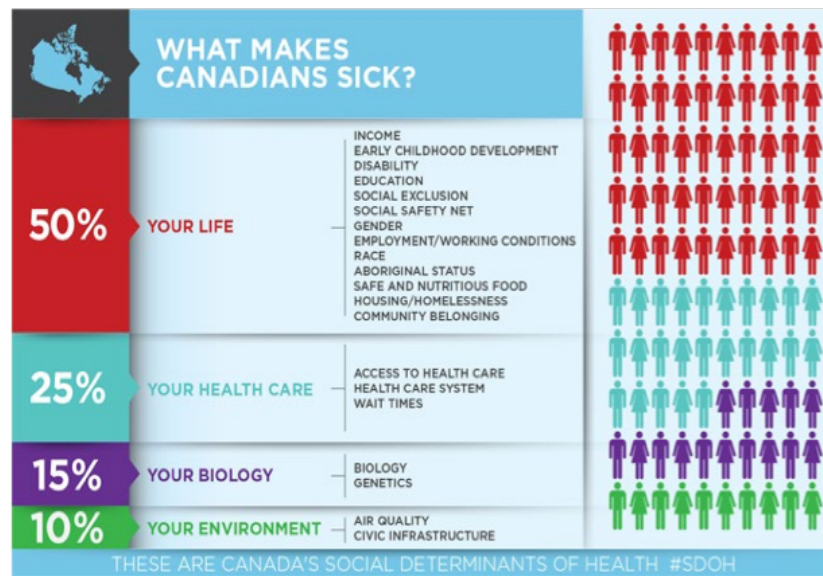
Level of Cause	Description	Examples
Distal (farthest away from an individual's health status) or societal	Cultural, political, and infrastructural causes	Education, income, housing conditions, air quality, access to food and water, road safety
Intermediate	Relationships, social contexts	Community factors, including those related to work, school, family, and peer environments
Proximal (closest to an individual's health status) or individual	Behaviors, capabilities, attitudes, and direct biological threats to health	Hygiene habits, exposure to disease vectors that cause diarrhea, dengue, malaria

- At the **distal level** are the wider circumstances in which people live, including broader cultural values, national or international political forces, laws or policies, or cross-cutting exposures like those related to climate, conflict, or the media. These factors are called distal because they are not directly related to the individual, but rather establish the wider context in which a person lives.
- At the **intermediate level** are factors related to communities, workplaces, schools, or families that define an individual's more immediate social environments.
- At the **proximal level** are factors directly related to individuals themselves which impact health, including personal biology, behaviors, capabilities, or attitudes. Considering the different levels at which determinants operate can help students keep track of a complex array of contributing factors, while also highlighting potential pathways between social exposures and physical health.

Source: Global Health Education and Learning Incubator. Harvard University. 2018

Canadian Medical Association Framework (CMA)

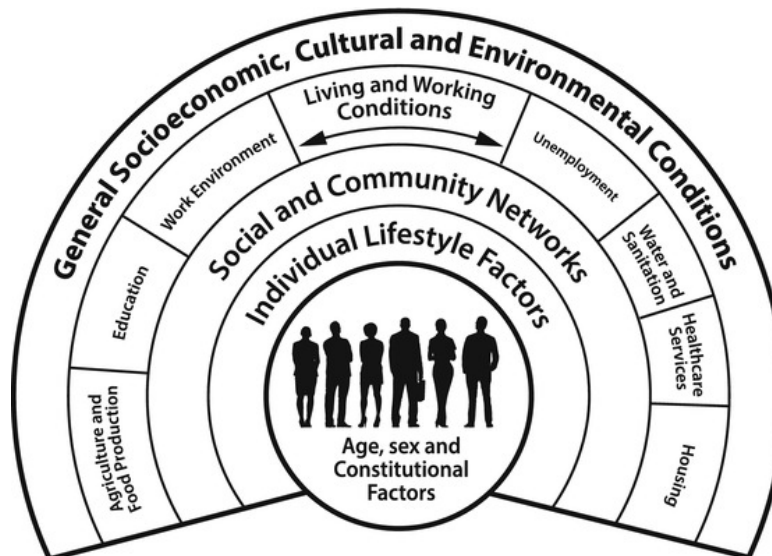
Source: Health Equity and the Social Determinants of Health. Canadian Medical Association 2017.



Dahlgren & Whitehead Framework (DW)

Source: Dahlgren G, Whitehead M. Policies and Strategies to Promote Social Equity in Health. Institute for Future Studies 1991.

https://openi.nlm.nih.gov/detailedresult.php?img=PMC2921286_jech082743.f1&req=4.



Elizabeth Ferber, MPH, M.Ed.
Ferber Healthcare Consultants
Eferber24@gmail.com
+351-962-107-200

FHC FERBER
HEALTHCARE
CONSULTANTS