Social Determinants of Health: the research

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What are social determinants of health?

Healthy eating in Canada: a close-up on social determinants of health

Research on social determinants of health and health inequities in Canada

How can we do things differently?
What determines our health?

1. Income and social status
2. Employment and working conditions
3. Education and literacy
4. Childhood experiences
5. Physical environments
6. Social supports and coping skills
7. Healthy behaviours
8. Access to health services
9. Biology and genetic endowment
10. Gender
11. Culture
12. Race / Racism
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Social determinants of health refer to a specific group of social and economic factors within the broader determinants of health.
Health Inequities

Health inequalities that are *unjust* AND *modifiable*
Age-standardized COVID-19 mortality rates in Canada between January 1, 2020 and December 31, 2020, by racialized groups and low income status (low-income measure (LIM) – after tax) in 2016

Age standardized mortality rate (per 100,000)

- Total Racialized populations: 44 (not in low income), 28 (in low income)
- South Asian: 48 (not in low income), 28 (in low income)
- Chinese: 24 (not in low income), 21 (in low income)
- Black: 103 (not in low income), 36 (in low income)
- Non-racialized population*: 30 (not in low income), 21 (in low income)

Note: *Non-racialized population excludes Indigenous people.
Dangerous Driving and Urban vs. Rural Schools:

In Canada, students from rural schools have almost 2x higher odds of driving after drinking than kids in urban schools

(Minaker et al, 2017)
Traditional 5 Tips for Better Health

1. Don’t smoke. If you can, stop. If you can’t, cut down
2. Follow a balanced diet with plenty of fruit and vegetables
3. Keep physically active
4. Manage stress by, for example, talking things through and making time to relax
5. If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation.
Social Determinants of Health: 5 Tips for Better Health

1. Don’t be poor. If you can, stop. If you can’t, try not to be poor for long
2. Don’t have poor parents
3. Own a car
4. Don’t work in a stressful, low-paid manual job. Practice not losing your job and don’t become unemployed
5. Don’t live next to a busy major road or near a polluting factory. Instead, live in a well-designed neighbourhood with lots of trees and green space.
Reframing Health

Let’s start thinking about life chances rather than life choices
Healthy Eating in Canada: an example

• Impacts of poor diets cost almost $16 billion per year in Canada!

• For both adults and kids, diet quality in Canada is poor and inequitably patterned - gaps are remaining stable or widening (Olstad et al, 2021)
Local Research

In 2009/2010:

1. Most people in Kitchener, Cambridge and Waterloo do not eat a healthy diet.

2. Rather than food deserts (gaps in access to healthy food), we have food swamps (overabundance of unhealthy food) in Waterloo Region.
Poor nutrition is a logical response to our current food environment

Today’s food environments exploit people’s biological, psychological, social, and economic vulnerabilities, making it easier for them to eat unhealthy foods (Lancet Obesity Series, 2015)
So who gave public health officials the right to tell us how to live our lives? And what can we do to shut them up?
Complexity breeds despair
Acceptance and Responsibility

• Accept: This is how things are right now.

• Inward-facing responsibility:
  • Who is responsible for solving this problem? (Which level of government? Which sector?)
  • How can I contribute?
  • Who do I need to work with to make this better?
Build Differently

• Listening to people who don’t typically attend community consultation meetings

As the gentrification of the Downtown is occurring, we're losing churches which is one of the primary sources of food ... [Social service program] is a collection of churches ... A couple have dropped out ... The Downtown Kitchener ones were very heavily utilized ... As the food opportunities locate further ... it's becoming more of a burden to have your food security ... If you're an individual who's dealing with addiction and mental health issues, and you're pulling everything in a two wheel cart ... do you have the capability to secure the food even if it's available? — Robert, male in his 40s, moderately food insecure

You know what happened if you rely on food bank ... it's not balanced diet ... Processed food actually puts you more weight ... and I decided to eat that instead of giving to my child. I use the money to buy fruit and veggies for him ... People with low income ... they're going to get sick, and they don't have the money for the medication ... it's gonna be a cycle of problem in there. — Josie, female in her 40s, moderately food insecure.

Ong, Skinner and Minaker, 2021
Build Differently

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Walking in a street that’s pretty narrow and just concrete walls, I think you feel a little anxious, nervous, not the happiest” (girl/14 years)

“[Victoria park lake] is calming. I can hear the water going around. I can see the ducks swimming around… I can almost stay here for a day and just watch whatever is happening out on the lake” (boy/15 years)

“[The open field in Victoria park] can be used for a lot of stuff... there are so many different possibilities and there are so many different types of people that come” (girl/10 years)

Buttazzoni, Dean & Minaker, 2022
Simple problems have already been solved.
Thanks for listening

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