

A RESOURCE FOR IMPROVING MEASURABLE IMPACT

Foundations of Community Health

What Factors Influence Your Health?

The first step to improving health is improving community conditions that facilitate health. To achieve this, it is vital to establish relationships, build trust, and actively work with communities and local stakeholders.



Healthy People 2030, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (1)

Examples of Foundations of Health (1-4):

- Safe housing
- Transportation
- Food security and access to healthy foods
- Opportunities for physical activity
- Income level
- Educational opportunities
- Early childhood experiences
- Social support
- Neighborhood crime rates and exposure to violence
- Access to safe drinking water

Factors that influence your health, collectively known as **social determinants of health** or **foundations of community health**, are the "conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age that contribute to health outcomes." (2) By improving community conditions (through laws, policies, and community partnerships), we can improve health. (3) All Americans should have the opportunity to make the choices that allow them to live a long, healthy life, regardless of their income, education, or ethnic background. (4) The **Foundations of Community Health framework** encourages working together with communities across sectors to improve community foundations and health benefits. (5)

Community Foundations of Health and Health Outcomes - How Does Texas Fare?

A recent study (March 2021) explored the contributions of community foundations of health to healthcare costs in Texas. Researchers from the UTHealth School of Public Health found that **socioeconomic factors** (e.g., unemployment, single-parent household) were the most significant contributor (40.2%) to healthcare costs for Texans younger than 19 years. (6)



Food Insecurity/Food Access:

In 2021, Texas had the 4th highest projected food insecurity rate (16.5%) compared to all other states. (7, 8)



Income and Education:

Hispanic Texans have lower income and educational attainment compared to non-Hispanic Texans. (9)



Healthcare Access:

Hispanic Texans are less likely to have access to care compared to non-Hispanic Texans. (9)

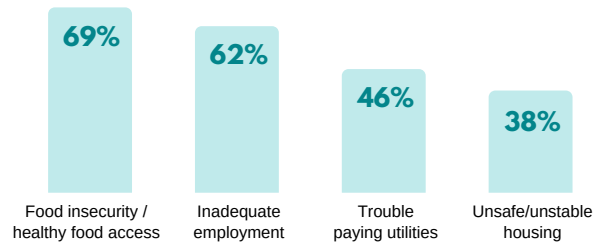


Housing:

Black Texans are more likely to live in areas of crime and poverty compared to other communities in Texas. (9)

Texans are less likely to be in very good/excellent health compared to other U.S. adults. (9)

During COVID-19, Texas Medicaid Managed Care Plans observed significant increases in **food insecurity, inadequate employment, trouble paying utilities, and unsafe/unstable housing** among their members. (10)



How do Community Conditions Influence Foundations of Community Health?

Below are some other examples of how community conditions affect foundations of community health for populations across the U.S. (11)



Transportation

Rural residents typically **travel farther** than urban residents to access healthcare delivery sites. (11, 12)



Food Access

Lower-income and non-White communities are less likely to have **access to grocery stores** with healthy food options. (11, 13, 14)



Broadband Access

Residents in both rural areas and low-income urban communities often have limited access to **high-speed internet**, which limits education access, employment opportunities, healthcare services, and social connectedness. (15)



Extreme Weather Conditions

Children, the elderly, people with chronic illnesses, and low-income and non-White communities are most likely to be affected by **extreme heat/cold, droughts, flooding, snow, or hurricanes** through malnutrition, hunger, mental health harms, and more. (16)

Recommendations for Policymakers and Other Stakeholders

Public Health Programs, Services, and Partnerships:

- Prioritize the collection of timely and actionable data to inform public health strategies. (17)
- Promote data sharing and partnerships between public health departments, other sectors (e.g., food, housing, transportation), and stakeholders (e.g., healthcare entities). (17)
- Include public health experts in policy workgroups, task forces, and advisory committees. (18)
- Assure communities, through their representatives on committees and advisory groups, are fully informed, engaged, and integrated into planning, initiatives, and programs.
- Encourage cross-sector collaboration by co-funding programs and strategies to improve health. (17)
- Support evaluation of the social and economic impact of public health programs. (17)
- Support surveillance and emergency preparedness for extreme weather events.

Broadband Access, Healthcare, Education, Food Access, Housing, Safety, and Transportation:

- Address disparities in broadband access – especially in rural areas and low-income urban areas. (15)
- Expand access to health services for rural Texans through telehealth. (19)
- Improve education through funding and provision of high-quality pre-kindergarten and kindergarten programs and high school completion programs. (19)
- Increase access to and nutritional quality of school meals. (19)
- Promote local, sustainable farms and food systems.
- Enhance access to affordable housing and the safety of homes. (19)
- Strengthen and fund crime prevention and enforcement strategies in high-crime neighborhoods.
- Strengthen transportation systems through street connectivity, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, safe routes to school, and public transit. (19)
- Actively engage community stakeholders in community initiatives.

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