

How social and economic determinants contribute to health inequalities.

A Level Health and Social Care

Which social and economic determinants contribute to health inequalities?

Social and Economic determinants can affect health in both positive and negative ways. An example of this is if you have a healthy diet and take physical exercise, this will have a positive effect on your health. On the other hand, the lack of a healthy diet would have a negative effect. Here are some of the social and economic determinants that contribute to health inequalities in Wales.

Lifestyle -

- Diet
- Physical exercise
- Use of alcohol, cigarettes, non-prescribed drugs
- Sexual activity
- Other risk-taking activity.

Social and community influences on health -

- Family organisation and roles
- Citizen power and influence
- Social support and social networks
- Neighbourliness
- Sense of belonging
- Local pride
- Divisions in community
- Social isolation
- Peer pressure
- Community identity
- Cultural and spiritual ethos
- Racism
- Other forms of social exclusion.

Environmental conditions that affect health -

- Built environment
- Neighbourhood design
- Housing
- Indoor environment
- Noise
- Air and water quality
- Attractiveness of area
- Community safety
- Smell/odour
- Waste disposal
- Road hazards
- Injury hazards
- Quality and safety of play areas.

Economic conditions affecting health -

- Unemployment
- Income
- Economic inactivity
- Type of employment
- Workplace conditions and access and opportunities in relation to jobs, housing, education and care services.

Access and quality of services -

- Medical services
- Other caring services
- Careers advice
- Shops and commercial services
- Public amenities
- Transport
- Education and training
- Information technology

Environmental and sustainability factors -

- Government policies
- Economic development
- Biological diversity
- Climate.

Personal characteristics -

- Sex
- Age
- Ethnic group
- Hereditary factors
- Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)
- Religion
- Beliefs.

There are many Social and economic determinants that affect the health of the nation and its population. The current economic climate remains difficult for people, public services, the private sector and the government. Opportunities to improve health in Wales are increasingly challenged. Government strategy is to promote ways of working together to tackle the health inequalities that exist in Wales.

Key Concepts

Health – Health depends on many factors and not just the presence or absence of disease. The wider, or social, determinants of health include the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age that can promote or detract from their health and well-being.

Social and economic determinants – The many factors that can have an impact on health and well-being. These include our social, physical and economic environment such as housing, leisure, employment, income, geographical location, air quality and education.

Tackling inequalities – Tackling the unfair and avoidable differences in health by improving people's social and economic prospects and by avoiding actions that can damage health.

Individual responsibility - Empowering and enabling people to take personal responsibility for improving their own health. It is important to be aware that some factors that contribute to health inequalities can be rectified by the individual through their own actions, such as stopping smoking or eating more healthily. This is encouraged by the government through campaigns to encourage people to eat more healthily, to exercise and to stop smoking. There are some determinants over which the individual has no control such as access to services or environmental pollution. These determinants need to be tackled and improved by government strategies that will eventually lead to the improvement of the health of people in Wales.

Who is most likely to suffer from inequalities in Health in Wales?

Who is most likely to be more disadvantaged and suffer health inequalities depends on the local population, the community and the area in which they live. Some groups of individuals suffer health inequalities wherever they live, such as children living in poverty.

- Age is often a factor in health inequalities for children, young people and the elderly.
- Income is often a factor and inequalities are more likely for people living on a low income, the unemployed and people who are unable to work due to ill health.
- Many groups of people will be disadvantaged in their health compared with other groups in the population and these include those who suffer discrimination or other social disadvantages, people with disabilities, people seeking asylum, travellers, single parent families, lesbian and gay people and some ethnic minority groups.
- Geographical issues can also be a factor as people living in areas which are described as economically disadvantaged and isolated areas often find it more difficult to access services, which can have a negative impact on their health.



...but the gaps between the least and most deprived areas show few signs of getting smaller.

