

EMPLOYMENT AS A SOCIAL DETERMINANT OF HEALTH

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Learning Objectives

1. Be able to describe the social determinants of health.
2. Be able to describe how employment is a social determinant of health, and the significance of employment and unemployment to an individual's health.
3. How to engage with job seekers and employers regarding the role meaningful employment plays in contributing to an individual's health.

“Social determinants of health (SDOH) are the conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, **work**, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks.”¹

– Healthy People 2030

Social Determinants of Health



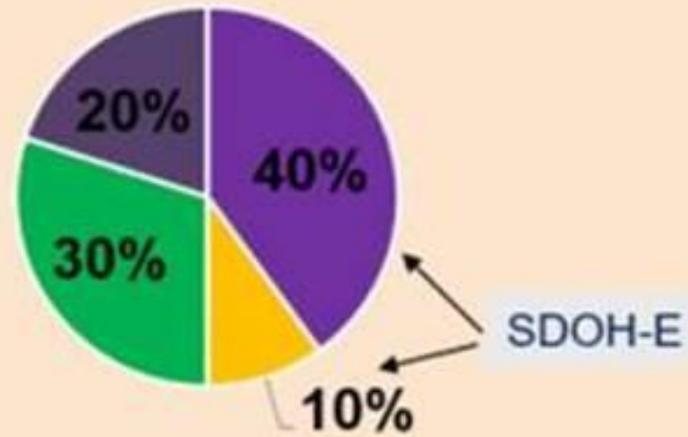
Figure 1

Social Determinants of Health

Economic Stability	Neighborhood and Physical Environment	Education	Food	Community and Social Context	Health Care System
Employment	Housing	Literacy	Hunger	Social integration	Health coverage
Income	Transportation	Language	Access to healthy options	Support systems	Provider availability
Expenses	Safety	Early childhood education		Community engagement	Provider linguistic and cultural competency
Debt	Parks	Vocational training		Discrimination	Quality of care
Medical bills	Playgrounds	Higher education		Stress	
Support	Walkability				
	Zip code / geography				

Health Outcomes
 Mortality, Morbidity, Life Expectancy, Health Care Expenditures, Health Status, Functional Limitations

Factors that determine health outcomes



- Social & Economic
- Physical environment
- Healthy behaviors
- Clinical care (quality and access)

Economic Stability

- In the United States, 1 in 10 people live in poverty. Many people are not able to afford needs like healthy foods, health care, and housing.¹
- People with steady employment are less likely to live in poverty and more likely to be healthy, but many people have trouble finding and keeping a job.¹
- People with disabilities, injuries, or conditions may be especially limited in their ability to work. In addition, many people with steady work still don't earn enough to afford the things they need to stay healthy.¹

Work as a Social Determinant of Health

- Work is an opportunity for better health⁶:
 - Source of income
 - Health insurance
 - Occupational power/prestige
 - Education
 - Working culture and benefits
 - Social supports
 - Demands – physical, environmental, and emotional

Experience of Work

The experience of work includes the intersectionality of identities⁵:

- Race/ethnicity, and immigrant status
- Socioeconomic status
- Gender identity and expression
- Rural/Urban living
- Sexual orientation

Unemployment

- Unemployment can have multiple effects including:
 - Health problems
 - Housing and food insecurity
 - Family stress
 - Physical and mental health challenges
 - Higher rates of depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, demoralization, worry, and physical pain.²
 - Perceived job insecurity, downsizing, or workplace closure and underemployment also have implications for physical and mental health. ²
 - Gaps in health care coverage and services

COVID-19 and Unemployment

Figure 1. Historical Unemployment Rate

Seasonally adjusted monthly data, January 1948 to July 2021



Source: Created by CRS using data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Series LNS14000000 extracted using the Labor Force Statistics data series at <https://www.bls.gov/data/>.

Notes: Shaded regions indicate recessionary periods as identified by the National Bureau of Economic Research.

COVID-19 and Unemployment

- In April 2020, the unemployment rate reached 14.8%—the highest rate observed since data collection began in 1948.⁶
- In July 2021, unemployment remained higher (5.4%) than it had been in February 2020 (3.5%).⁶
- The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted certain industries in particular⁶:
 - The hospitality sector lost the largest number of jobs since January 2020, and workers last employed in this sector have consistently high unemployment rates throughout the pandemic.
- Part-time workers experienced higher unemployment (24.5%) rate than full-time workers (18%) at the beginning of the pandemic.⁶

Engaging with Employers

- Discussion around the Social Determinants of Health – with employers and job seekers
 - Not necessarily your role to teach on all things SDOH; some talking points that focus on solution versus the problem:
 - “Health starts long before illness. It starts in our homes, schools and jobs.”
 - “The opportunity for health starts long before you need medical care. A part-time position here would be wonderful to continue to improve the work ‘John’ has been great at.”
 - “Health begins where we live, learn, work and play.”
 - “Sally has struggled with some barriers navigating the health care system, but is actively seeking a job to improve their economic health.”
- Look for signs of burnout
- Celebrate non work related skills and wins
- Ask about other incentive program that the job seeker may access
- COVID-19 – ask about differences in daily workload, schedule, and procedures before and during Pandemic

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