

Why Health Equity is Critical to Improving Health Outcomes

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**PolicyLink is a national research
and action institute advancing
economic and social equity by
Lifting Up What Works. ®**

The PolicyLink Center for Health Equity and Place recognizes that improving health is dependent on improving the social and economic conditions that are at the root of disparate health outcomes.

***Where you live
affects how you
live.***



Source: Creative Commons

What is Health Equity?

Equity means *just and fair inclusion.*

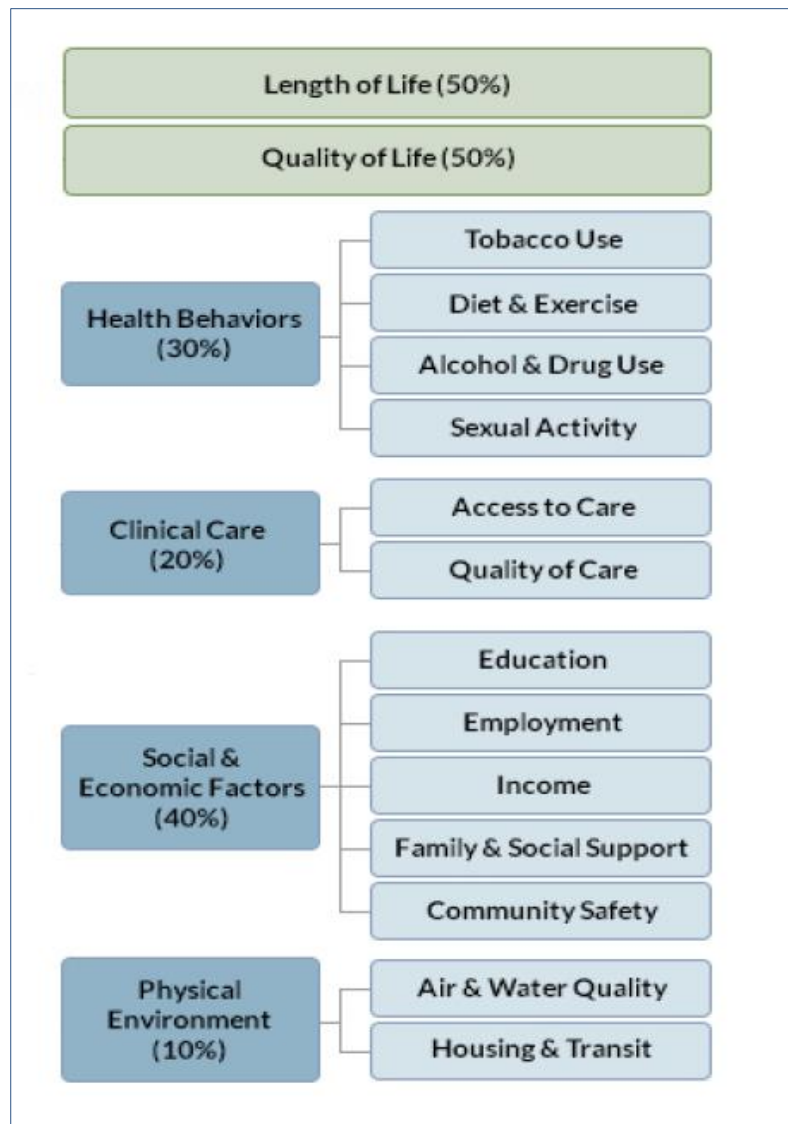
Health equity is *attainment of the highest level of health for all people.*



What Impacts Health?

The Role of Social Determinants

County Health Rankings



*Source: 2016
County Health
Rankings, Robert
Wood Johnson
Foundation*

Race, Class, Ethnicity and Health

Contributing Factors to Health Status

- **Discrimination/Racism** – practices & behaviors (institutionalized and internalized)
- **Segregation** – in homes, schools, workplaces
- **Cumulative Stress** – Repeated assault of living with racism creates physiologic – flight or fight response
- **Relative sense of control over one's life choices** – quality of life diminishes when people are not able to exert high level of control over how their lives are lived.

Racial Injustice as a Determinant of Health Disparities

- Racial discrimination can literally **‘age’ the body** and may contribute to the poorer health outcomes.
- The cumulative impact of racism results in **lowered immune system**, which leads to a greater risk for a poorer overall health status.
- A majority of black Americans report racial discrimination as a **chronic stressor**, which has a negative impact on health.

Source: RWJF Scholars Forum: Disparities, Resilience, and Building a Culture of Health, Amani M. Nuru-Jeter

Designed for Disease

Access to healthy food matters—one recent study found that fruit and vegetable intake of African Americans increased by 32% for each additional supermarket in a census tract.



Communities of Opportunity

- Parks
- Grocery Stores
- Financial Institutions
- Better Performing Schools
- Good Public Transit

Good Health Status

Poor Health Status

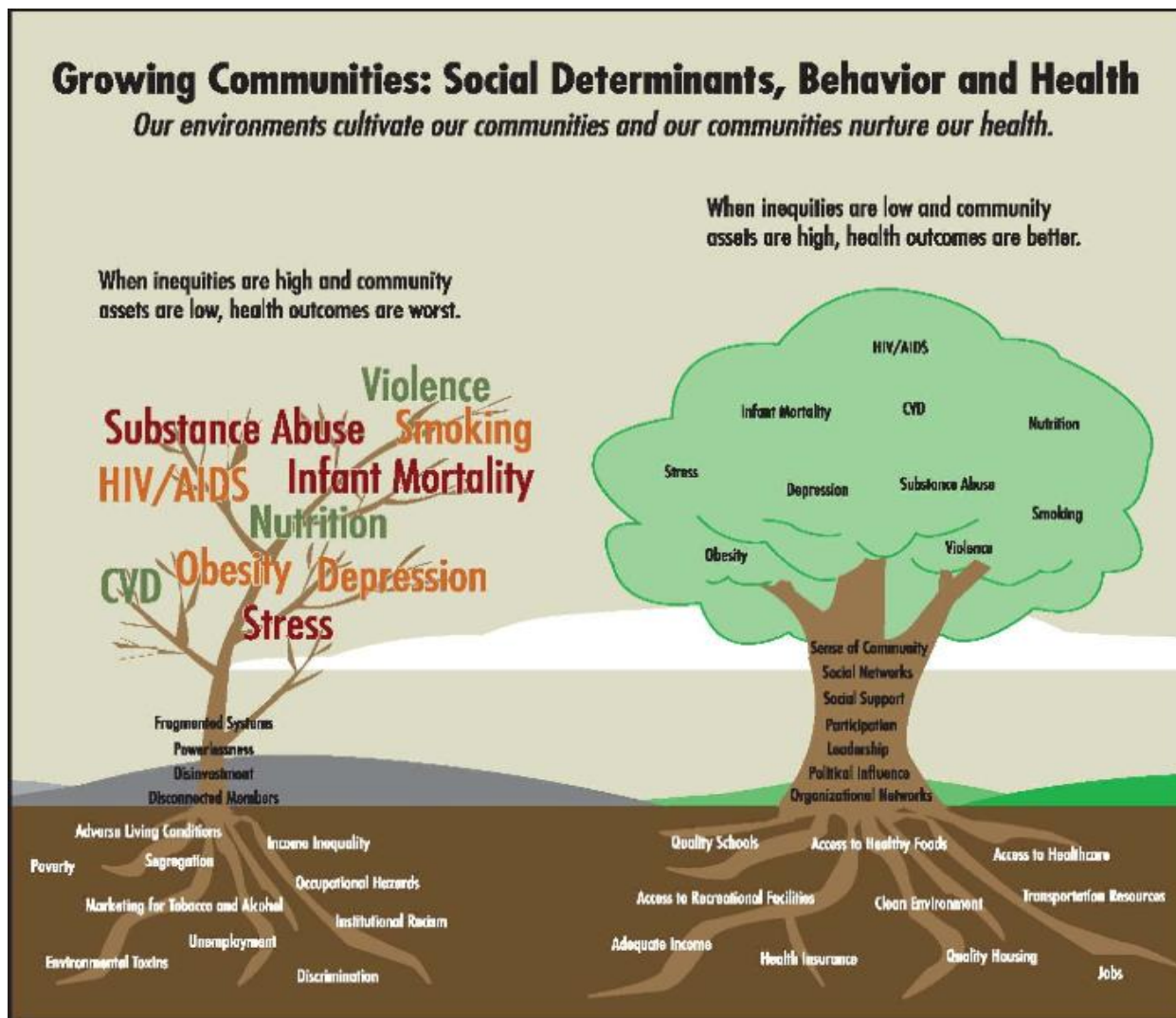
Contributes to health disparities:

- Obesity
- Diabetes
- Asthma
- Infant mortality

Low- Income Communities

- Fast Food Restaurants
- Liquor Stores
- Unsafe/Limited Parks
- Poor Performing Schools
- Toxic Waste Sites
- Limited Public Transportation
- Increased crime

Health Inequities



Why Act Now? America is Unhealthy*

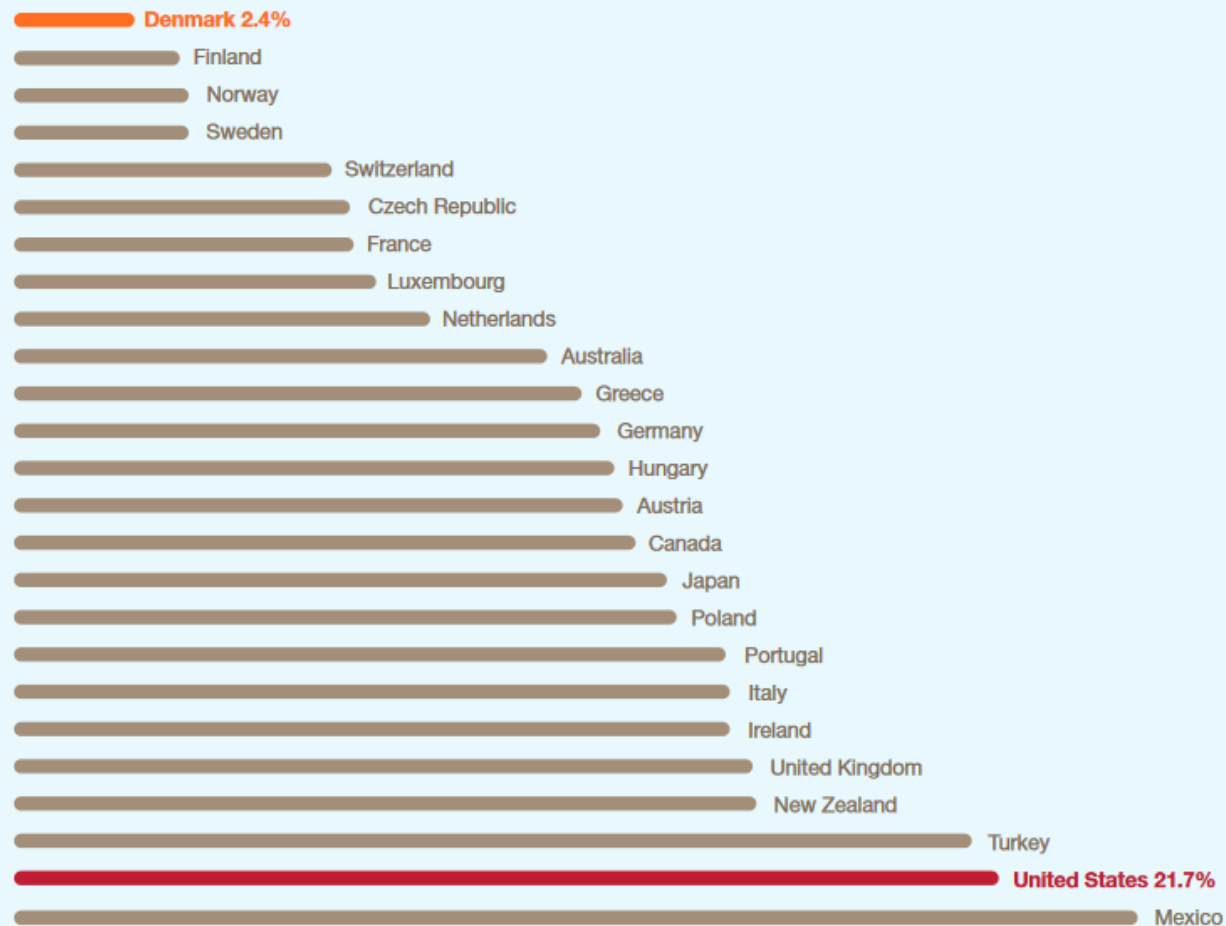
Within the U.S., nearly a fifth of all Americans live in unhealthy neighborhoods:

- Limited job opportunities
- Low-quality housing
- Limited access to healthy food
- Few opportunities for physical activity

*This slide is from the RWJF Commission for a Healthier America.

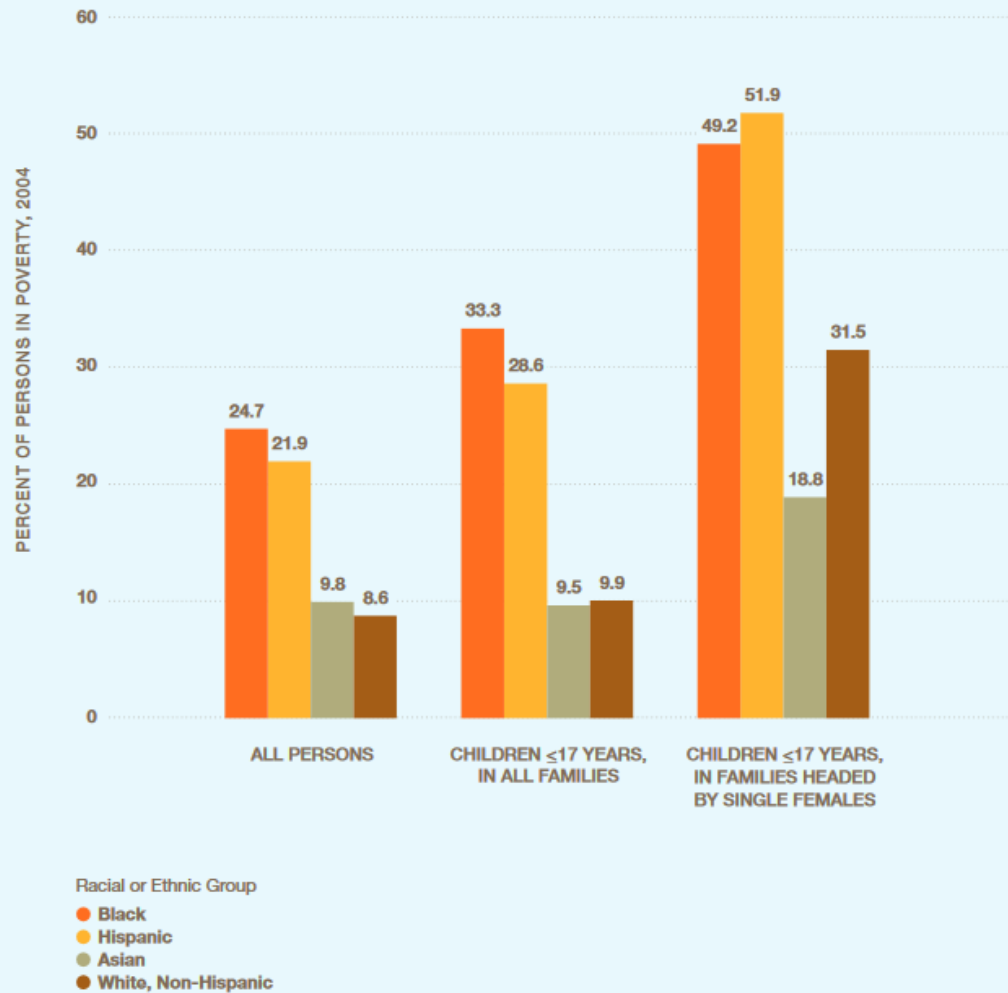
More Child Poverty in America

figure 11 The U.S. has higher rates of child poverty* than many other countries. In 2000, one-fifth of American children were poor—a proportion that was nine times higher than in Denmark.



Racial or Ethnic Differences in Poverty

figure 12 Higher proportions of black and Hispanic Americans live in poverty. These patterns are particularly striking for children.



Losing Ground in Health: Infant Mortality

figure 14 We are losing ground among industrialized countries with respect to important health indicators:
Our ranking for infant mortality (IMR) has slipped from 18th in 1980 to 25th in 2002.

1980	Rank	2002
IMR = 6.9 Sweden	1	Iceland IMR = 2.3
Japan	2	Finland
Finland	3	Japan
Iceland	4	Sweden
Norway	5	Norway
Denmark	6	Austria
Netherlands	7	Czech Republic
Switzerland	8	France
France	9	Spain
Canada	10	Germany
Australia	11	Belgium
Ireland	12	Denmark
Luxembourg	13	Italy
Belgium	14	Australia
United Kingdom	15	Netherlands
Spain	16	Portugal
Germany	17	Switzerland
IMR = 12.6 United States	18	Greece
New Zealand	19	Ireland
Austria	20	Luxembourg
Italy	21	United Kingdom
Czech Republic	22	Korea
Korea	23	Canada
Greece	24	New Zealand
Slovak Republic	25	United States IMR = 7.0
Hungary	26	Hungary
Portugal	27	Poland
Poland	28	Slovak Republic
Mexico	29	Mexico
Turkey	30	Turkey

Why Didn't Higher Education Protect Hispanic and Black Wealth?

Median Family Income in 2013

	Four-Year College Graduates	Non-College Graduates	Median College Income as a Multiple of Median Non-College Income
All Families	\$87,250	\$36,523	2.4
White	\$94,351	\$41,474	2.3
Asian	\$92,931	\$32,668	2.8
Hispanic	\$68,379	\$30,436	2.2
Black	\$52,147	\$26,581	2.0

TABLE 2

Median Family Net Worth in 2013

	Four-Year College Graduates	Non-College Graduates	Median College Net Worth as a Multiple of Median Non-College Net Worth
All Families	\$273,586	\$43,625	6.3
White	\$359,928	\$80,692	4.5
Asian	\$250,637	\$25,632	9.8
Hispanic	\$49,606	\$12,160	4.1
Black	\$32,780	\$9,006	3.6

SOURCE FOR BOTH TABLES: Survey of Consumer Finances

Solutions

Value and Principles of Place-based Initiatives



- **Community centered**
 - Centered in unique needs and interests of community
- **Broad engagement**
 - Inviting local leaders to assist in guiding program development

- **Evidence-based**
 - Lifting-up tested local innovations using best available evidence
- **Targeted**
 - Advancing health equity efforts for hardest hit communities and populations

- **Comprehensive**
 - Anchored by integrated, inter-agency partnerships and collaborations, bringing multiple efforts together, no siloed approaches
- **Leveraged**
 - Using public investments to attract and direct corporate, nonprofit, and philanthropic resources

- **Results-driven**
 - Data-backed, goal oriented, with significant evaluation metrics
- **Innovative**
 - Building-in flexibility to drive innovation

An Equity Agenda

Policy & Environmental Changes to Support Health

- Safety/violence prevention
- School wellness policies
- Land use/zoning
- Safe Routes to School
- Trails and safe parks
- Bike share programs
- Developing or updating neighborhood/general plans
- Grocery stores/supermarkets
- Corner store/bodega and restaurant initiatives
- Farmers' markets & collaboratives with local farmers
- EBT access at farmers' markets



The Importance of Engaging Community

Principles of Community Engagement

- **Empower residents** through meaningful inclusion and partnerships
- Prioritize **community knowledge** and concerns
- **Target resources** to support ongoing engagement
- Facilitate mechanisms that encourage **mutual learning and feedback mechanisms**

Institutional Structures for Community Engagement

**Ascending
Impact**



**Descending
Impact**

Institutionalizing Health Equity - Lessons Learned

- 1. Address systemic racism**
- 2. Common language and a shared vision**
- 3. Plan for transitioning leadership**
- 4. Invest in public health workforce**
- 5. Consider regional collaboratives**
- 6. Leverage power of other gov't agencies**
- 7. Use accessible language**
- 8. Community level data is fundamental**
- 9. Develop health equity indicators**
- 10. Identify strong levers for advancing equity**

Ingredients of Success

- Strong, sustained leadership
- Commitment across sectors
- Bold risk takers/thinking outside the box
- Equity-focused strategies
- Creative, compelling use of data

Ingredients of Success, cont'd

- Government-community partnerships
- Adequate resources
- Long term involvement
- Continuous assessment of impact and modifications, as needed

Achieving Equity is Possible

Ιμαγε σουρξ: [ΝΕΡΟΝΕ ΑΜΕΡΙΞΑΝ ΣΟΜΜΟΥΝΤΥ ΔΕΒΕΛΟΠΜΕΝΤ ΙΝΣΤΙΤΟΥΤ](#)

Thank you!



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