

Social Determinants of Health: The Canadian Facts

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Foreword by Hon. Monique Bégin (Former Minister of National Health & Welfare of Canada)

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“.....The primary factors that shape the health of Canadians are not medical treatments or lifestyle choices but rather the living conditions they experience. These conditions have come to be known as the social determinants of health. This information – based on decades of research and hundreds of studies in Canada and elsewhere – is unfamiliar to most Canadians. Canadians are largely unaware that our health is shaped by how income and wealth is distributed, whether or not we are employed and if so, the working conditions we experience.

Our health is also determined by the health and social services we receive, and our ability to obtain quality education, food and housing, among other factors. And contrary to the assumption that Canadians have personal control over these factors, in most cases these living conditions are – for better or worse – imposed upon us by the quality of the communities, housing situations, work settings, health and social service agencies, and educational institutions with which we interact.

Improving the health of Canadians requires we think about health and its determinants in a more sophisticated manner than has been the case to date. *Social Determinants of Health: The Canadian Facts* considers 14 social determinants of health:

1. Income and Income Distribution
2. Education
3. Unemployment and Job Security
4. Employment and Working Conditions
5. Early Childhood Development
6. Food Insecurity
7. Housing
8. Social Exclusion
9. Social Safety Network
10. Health Services
11. Aboriginal Status
12. Gender
13. Race
14. Disability

The publication outlines why they are important; how Canada is doing in addressing them; and what can be done to improve their quality. The purpose of the document is to provide promote greater awareness of the social determinants of health and the development and implementation of public policies that improve their quality.”

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