



UTAH DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH**  
Office of Health Disparities

# Health Disparities, Health Equity, and the Social Determinants of Health

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# Objectives

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1. Define health disparities and what constitutes a health disparity
2. Understand the link between health disparities and health equity
3. Understand the link between health disparities and the social determinants of health
4. Explain the role of public health in addressing health disparities

# Health Disparities and Health Outcomes

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- Health disparities are more than differences in health outcomes.
- The fact that some individuals or groups die sooner, or experience a disease more severely, than others is a necessary and yet insufficient condition to establish a disparity.
- A disparity implies that the difference is avoidable, unfair, and unjust.

# How it is decided what is avoidable, unfair, and unjust?

*The difference is detrimental to groups that are already disadvantaged in opportunity and/or resources.*

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- Skiers in Utah have more leg/arm fracture than non-skiers
- Pacific Islanders in Utah have a higher obesity rate than non-Pacific Islanders
  
- Life expectancy in men is lower than in women
- Life expectancy in men with less than a high school diploma is lower than in men with a college degree
  
- Elderly adults have a higher arthritis prevalence than younger adults
- Elderly adults in Piute County have a higher arthritis prevalence than elderly adults in Salt Lake County
  
- White women are more likely to be diagnosed with breast cancer than non-White women
- Lower-SES women are more likely to die of breast cancer than higher-SES women

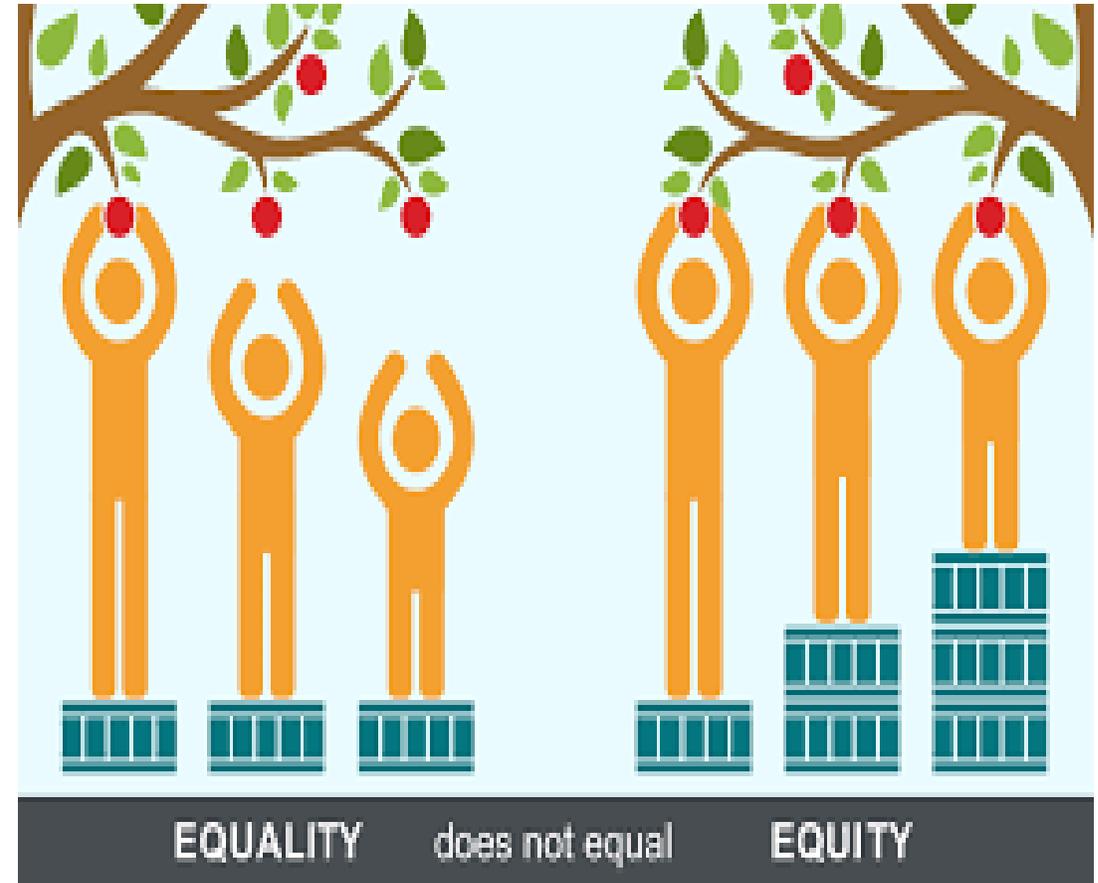
# Health Disparities and Health Equity

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- Health disparities (HD) are differences in health outcomes that are closely linked to economic, socio-cultural, and environmental/geographic disadvantage.
- Health disparities are the metrics by which health equity is assessed.
- Health equity is the principle behind the commitment to pursue the highest possible standard of health for all while focusing on those with the greatest obstacles.

# Equity vs. Equality

- Equity involves treating each individual according to his or her needs.
- Equality involves treating every individual in the same manner, regardless of their needs.



# Health Disparities and the Social Determinants of Health

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It is important to recognize the impact that the determinants of health have on health outcomes.



It is important to recognize the impact that the SOCIAL determinants of health have on health disparities

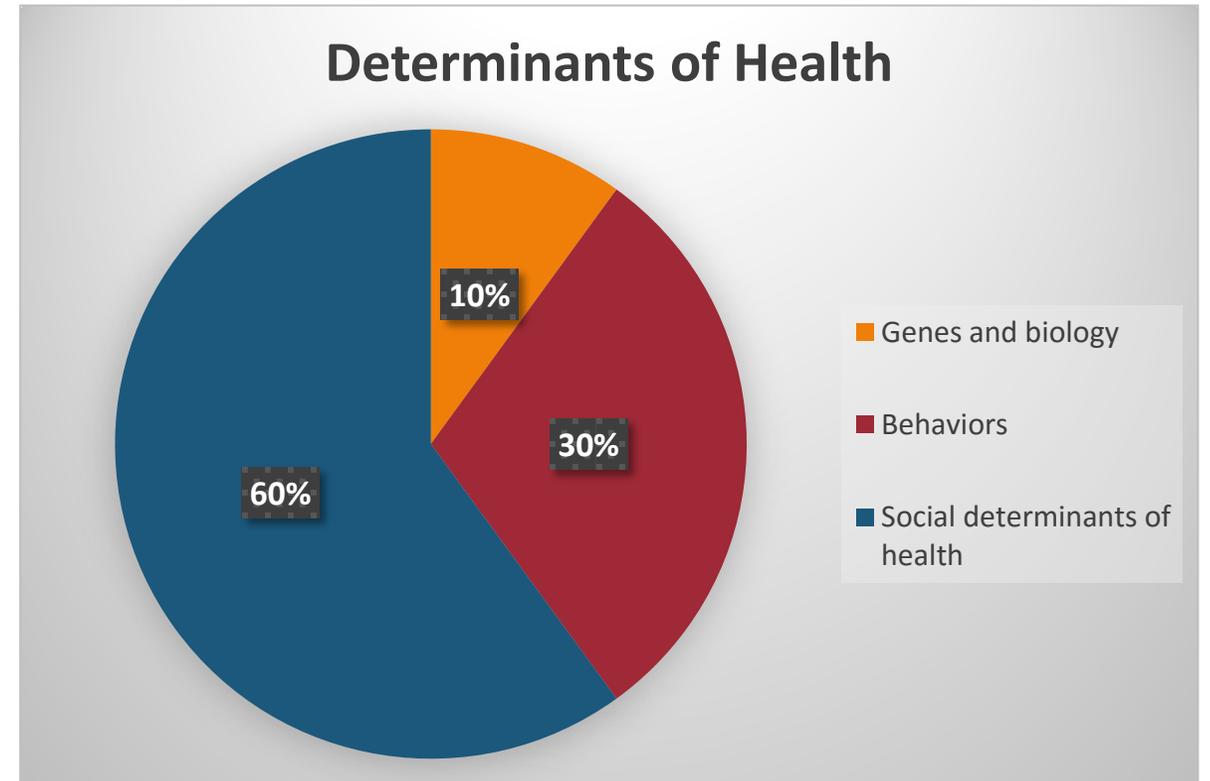


# The Determinants of Health

The determinants of health are factors that contribute to a person's current state of health.

They are:

1. Genes and biology
2. Health behaviors
3. **Social determinants of health**
  - A. Social environment or social characteristics
  - B. Physical environment
  - C. Access to health services



# The Social Determinants of Health

The SDOH are economic and social conditions that influence the health of people and communities.

These conditions are shaped by the amount of money, power, and resources that people have, all of which are influenced by policy.

<b>Economic Stability</b>	<b>Neighborhood and Physical Environment</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Food</b>	<b>Community and Social Context</b>	<b>Health Care System</b>
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			
Support	Walkability				

## Health Outcomes

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

# — REACHING FOR — *Health Equity*

Reducing health disparities brings us closer to reaching health equity.



Programs designed  
to reduce health  
disparities



U.S. Department of  
Health and Human Services  
Centers for Disease  
Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/minorityhealth/strategies2016/>

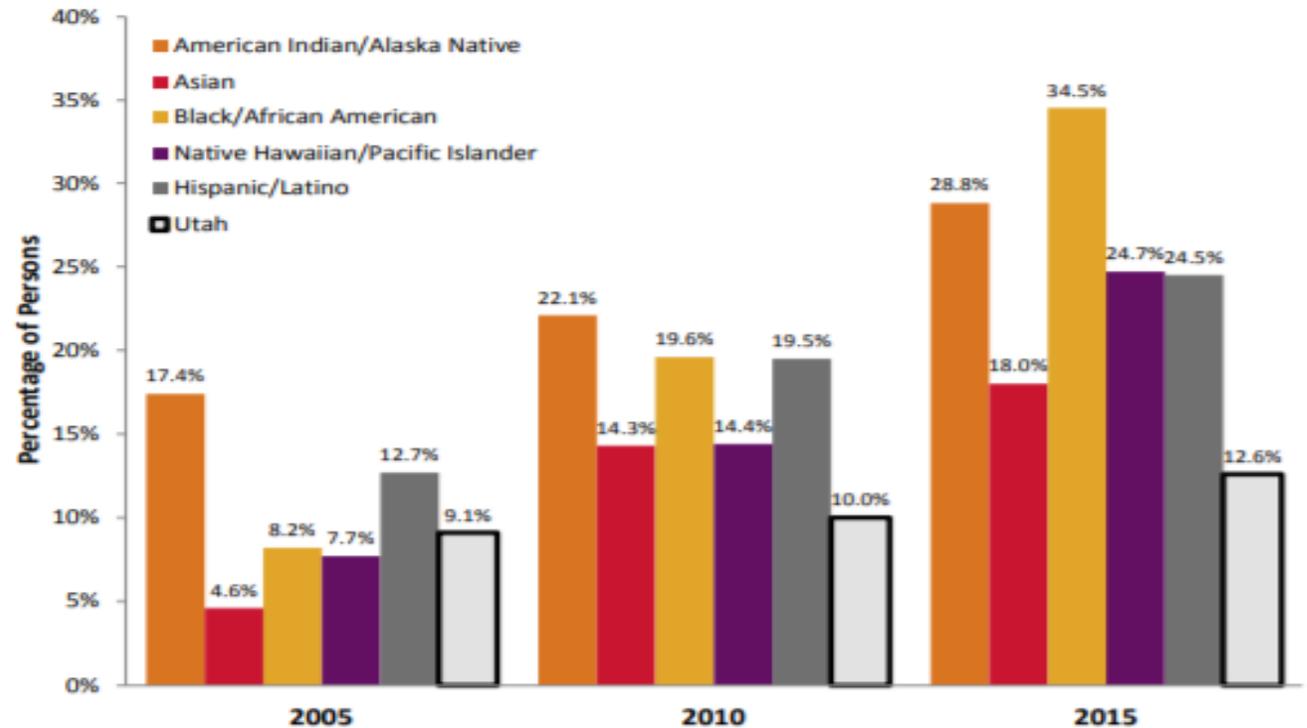
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# Disparity Gap

- “Disparity gap” is defined as the numerical difference between the state estimate and the estimate for each minority group for each indicator.
- If the state value does not fall within the 95% CI of the value for the demographic group, then it was flagged as statistically different.

## Poverty Disparity

Figure 1. Percentage of the population living in poverty by reporting year and race/ethnic group, Utah, 2005, 2010, and 2015



Source: U.S. Census 2000 (2005 reporting year) and American Community Survey Years 2006–2008 (2010 reporting year), and 2013 (2015 reporting year)

# Disparity Gap (cont.)

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- The disparity gap increases (↑) when the difference between the overall population and the specific demographic group is higher for the newest report than for the previous report.
- The disparity gap decreases (↓) when the difference between the overall population and the specific demographic group is lower for the newest report than for the previous report.
- The disparity gap keeps constant (=) when the difference between the overall population and the specific demographic group for the newest report is within three percent of the previous report.

# How Health Disparities Can be Addressed at the Public Health Level?

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- Research shows that downstream prevention interventions (directed at individual-level factor) are more likely than upstream interventions (directed at social or policy level) to increase health disparities.
- An effective public health approach should:
  1. Move beyond monitoring disparities to link disparities with social determinants of health.
  2. In addition to the individual level approach, work also on a system level approach.

# System Level Approach

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1. Support data collection efforts and use data to analyze needs
  - Consider ways to support or share data collection within the agency and between agencies
2. Support collaborations within the agency, between agencies, and across sectors
  - Discuss ways to leverage efforts and existing funding
3. Consider HD using a social determinants of health lens
  - Consider policies that may address SDOH as away to improve health for communities experiencing disparities

# Conclusion

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- Eliminating health disparities is not just a social justice issue.
- Eliminating health disparities requires leveraging multiple strategies and policies.
- Successful efforts will save millions of dollars in health care spending and lost of productivity.

