

# Beyond Medicine: How Social Determinants Shape Our Health

Social Determinants of Health (SDoH) refer to the environmental, social, and economic factors that influence the health outcomes of individuals and communities. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), SDoH are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age. Research shows that up to 80% of an individual's overall health outcomes are shaped by SDoH, with only 10-20% influenced by direct medical care. Alarming, about 68% of patients have at least one SDoH negatively affecting their health.



SDoH can be broken down into five key domains:

**1. Economic Stability:**

Employment, income, and access to housing and nutritious food are essential for health. Economic insecurity can limit access to resources and care.

**2. Education Access and Quality:**

Education affects health literacy, job opportunities, and informed decision-making. Higher education levels are linked to better health outcomes.

**3. Health Care Access and Quality:**

Access to healthcare services, insurance, and quality care is crucial. Limited access can lead to untreated health issues.

**4. Neighborhood and Built Environment:**

Living conditions, transportation access, and exposure to pollution affect health risks. Safe environments promote healthier living.



**5. Social and Community Context:** Social support networks, community engagement, and experiences of discrimination impact mental and physical well-being.



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## Importance of SDoH

Unsurprisingly, a person's zip code can be a better predictor of health than their genetic code. Life expectancy can vary by up to 20 years based on where someone lives due to differences in SDoH. Addressing these factors is vital for reducing health disparities and improving public health. Tackling SDoH requires efforts beyond healthcare, focusing on policies related to education, housing, and employment to create healthier, more equitable communities.