Annotated Bibliography
Social Determinants of Health
2018

This bibliography is a selective sampling of educational resources designed to introduce students to the basic concepts of the social determinants of health, with a focus on understanding the causes of health inequities observed between groups. The multidisciplinary materials may be suitable for students at the undergraduate college and public health graduate school levels. Learning objectives and supporting materials will vary depending on how the material is used in a course. Brief annotations provide a cursory summary, and indicate where certain materials may be particularly relevant. Within each section, dated publications are listed in chronological order.

This selective bibliography accompanies a teaching pack developed by the Global Health Education and Learning Incubator at Harvard University. Additional materials in the pack include an instructor’s note, a teaching guide titled “Brief Introduction to the Social Determinants of Health,” four lesson plans with suggested classroom activities, and a glossary of terms. Educators may access further supplementary materials through the Incubator’s free, online resource repository (http://repository.gheli.harvard.edu).

The materials listed here represent a diversity of viewpoints and opinions and do not necessarily reflect the viewpoints and opinions of the Incubator.

This annotated bibliography includes:

- Basic Reads
- Reports
- Articles
- Data Publications, Ports, and Interactives
- Multimedia and News
- Teaching Materials
Selected Resources – At a Glance

### BASIC READS


**Article.** Marmot M. Social Determinants of Health Inequalities. The Lancet 2005; 365(9464): 1099-1104. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(05)71146-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(05)71146-6).

**Glossary.** Krieger N. A Glossary for Social Epidemiology. Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health 2001; 55: 693–700. DOI: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/jech.55.10.693](http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/jech.55.10.693).

### REPORTS


### ARTICLES


## Social Determinants of Health: Annotated Bibliography

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### DATA PUBLICATIONS, PORTALS, AND INTERACTIVES


### MULTIMEDIA AND NEWS


### TEACHING MATERIALS

| Teaching Case. Holman SR, Shayegan L. Toilets and Sanitation at the Kumbh Mela. Global Health Education and Learning Incubator at Harvard University, Harvard School of Public Health, FXB Center for Health and Human Rights, Harvard University 2014. [http://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/10697](http://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/10697). |

*indicates resource listed in GHELI’s online repository
Social Determinants of Health: Annotated Bibliography

Annotated Bibliography

**BASIC READS**

**Evidence on Social Determinants of Health**
This web portal provides information on two types of evidence that support the need to address social determinants of health: evidence based on the causes and consequences of poor health, and evidence based on themes including employment conditions, social exclusion, priority public health conditions, women and gender equity, early child development, globalization, health systems, measurement and evidence, and urbanization.

**Social Determinants of Health Inequalities**
This article from *The Lancet* provides a summary of the global concerns that led to establishment of a World Health Organization Commission on Social Determinants of Health and describes some of its goals. The article is a useful overview of health inequalities, with examples of health outcomes stratified by social groups within a population. The article points toward anticipated responses and policies that could be enacted to address social health inequalities from a social justice perspective.

**A Glossary for Social Epidemiology**
This glossary of terms offers both a general overview as well as definitions for terminology related to the social determinants of health. These include thorough explanations of concepts such as social inequality, multiple types of discrimination (sexism, racism), ecosocial theory of disease distribution, human rights and social justice, poverty, social class, and stress. The author points out the relationships between these concepts and public health.

**REPORTS**

**Communities in Action: Pathways to Health Equity**
GHELI repository link: [http://repository.g heli.harvard.edu/repository/11049](http://repository.g heli.harvard.edu/repository/11049).
This report, published by the National Academies Press, explores inequities in factors that impact health—social determinants of health—and the disparities in health status among different populations within the United States. Community-wide problems related to poverty, education, housing and community infrastructure, and safety all contribute to health inequities, as do systemic and historical forces. This report describes the myriad causes of health disparities, and articulates strategies and policies that communities and stakeholders can take to mitigate those inequities and promote greater and more equitable health.

GHELI repository link: [http://repository.g heli.harvard.edu/repository/10967](http://repository.g heli.harvard.edu/repository/10967).
This report from the World Bank details the progress the world has made towards global development goals.
and examines the impact of demographic change on achieving these goals. The report describes the decline of those living in global poverty, which has been reclassified. It also revises world economic growth projections for 2015 down to 3.3 percent on the basis of lower growth prospects in emerging markets. In addition, this report analyzes how profound demographic shifts could alter the course of global development. The world is undergoing a major population shift that will reshape economic development for decades. The direction and pace of this transition varies dramatically from country to country, with differing implications depending on where a country stands on the spectrum of aging and economic development. The report suggests incorporating the shifts in demographic changes into setting policy priorities may lead to sustained development progress.

**Human Development Report 2016: Human Development for Everyone**
GHELI repository link: [http://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/11509](http://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/11509)

This 2016 Human Development Report (HDR) explores the significant gains in human development in recent decades, but focuses primarily on who has been left behind and why. The report works to identify groups of people more likely to face disadvantages and inequities, and examines deep-rooted, overlooked barriers to development on the national and global scale. In addition, the report discusses what could be done to further ensure human development for everyone by providing policy recommendations and actionable agendas for nations.

**Global Nutrition Report 2017: Nourishing the SDGs**
GHELI repository link: [http://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/10926](http://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/10926)

This report from Development Initiatives Poverty Research Ltd. and produced and disseminated by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) documents the status of the world’s nutrition and progress made to meet global nutrition targets established by the World Health Assembly. The 2017 edition places particular focus on the role of nutrition in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, which was adopted by the international community in 2015 and established 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to address global challenges through economic, social, and environmental progress. Information is provided on nutrition indicators in children, adolescents, and adults, social determinants, and intervention coverage; food supply; economics; and demography. The report suggests that there are five core areas of development that run through the SDGs which nutrition can contribute to and benefit from—sustainable food production, infrastructure, health systems, equity and inclusion, and peace and stability—and emphasizes that ending malnutrition in all its forms will catalyze improved outcomes across the SDGs.

**Women and Health: The Key for Sustainable Development**
GHELI repository link: [http://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/11059](http://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/11059)

This Lancet Commission report examines girls’ and women’s health, emerging transitions and important unmet needs that remain. Population aging and transformations in the social determinants of health have increased the coexistence of disease burdens related to reproductive health, nutrition, and infections, and the emerging epidemic of chronic and noncommunicable diseases. Simultaneously, worldwide priorities in women’s health have themselves been changing from a narrow focus on maternal and child health to the broader framework of sexual and reproductive health and to the encompassing concept of women’s health, which is founded on a life-course approach. This expanded vision incorporates health challenges that affect women beyond their reproductive years and those that they share with men, but with manifestations and results that affect women disproportionally owing to biological, gender, and other social determinants.
The Economics of the Social Determinants of Health and Health Inequalities: A Resource Book
GHELI repository link: http://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/10977
This resource provides insight into how an economic argument can be made to invest in social determinants of health. The strong links between socioeconomic factors or policies and health are well documented. Yet even when health and health equity are seen as important markers of development, expressing the benefits of social determinants of health interventions in health and health equity terms alone is not always sufficiently persuasive in policy settings where health is not a priority, or when trade-offs exist between health and other public policy objectives. This resource book addresses the economic arguments for addressing three major social determinants of health: education, social protection, and urban development and infrastructure.

Energy: Shared Interests in Sustainable Development and Energy Services
GHELI repository link: http://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/11421
This sectoral briefing by the World Health Organization focuses on the energy sector and its relation to the social determinants of health. The brief discusses a number of intersectoral goals, primarily related to reliable energy supply, universal access, and efficient production. This publication is part of a series launched in response to the “Health in All Policies” international meeting in Adelaide in 2010, with the intent to show the driving forces behind other sectors’ effects on health equity. Aiming to highlight the areas in each sector where collaboration can be achieved, the series tries to find mutual benefit in working towards public health interventions.

Closing the Health Equity Gap: Policy Options and Opportunities for Action
GHELI repository link: http://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/10976
This report from the World Health Organization provides a brief overview of the best evidence regarding the principal social determinants of health and opportunities for action available to policy-makers. Health inequities are unfair, avoidable and remediable differences in health status between countries and between different groups of people within the same country. Health inequities are attracting increasing attention on national and global policy agendas. Despite this, few countries have been able systematically to reduce them.

Hidden Cities: Unmasking and Overcoming Health Inequities in Urban Settings
GHELI repository link: http://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/11501
This report from the World Health Organization and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme examines the global issue of health inequities within urban settings. With a focus on the social determinants of health inherent to where people live and work, the report discusses the benefits and burdens of rapid urbanization. The report concludes with a call to action for policy makers and health officials to address these issues, arguing that the global community is collectively responsible to ensure that cities are healthy places for people as the world moves towards an urban future.

Closing the Gap in a Generation: Health Equity Through Action on the Social Determinants of Health: Final Report of the Commission on Social Determinants of Health
This report from the World Health Organization (WHO) details the recommendations of the Commission on the Social Determinants of Health. The Commission recommends that all WHO members take action in order to achieve health equity. It emphasizes that governments, civil society actors, the WHO itself, and other global actors must come together to improve health and well-being worldwide. It further argues that attaining health equality in the near future is both achievable and necessary.

**ARTICLES**

**Transgender Health**
GHELI repository link: [http://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/11134](http://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/11134)
This Lancet Series aims to understand and provide a framework to improve the health and lives of transgender people globally. Transgender people and their needs remain little understood, not only by health care providers but also more generally in society. The three papers in this series examine the social and legal conditions in which many transgender people live, clinical care considerations and service delivery models in transgender health, and the global health burden facing transgender populations, including the specific contexts and multiple determinants of health affecting them.

**Inequalities in Health: Definitions, Concepts, and Theories**
GHELI repository link: [http://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/11080](http://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/11080)
This article defines and distinguishes between unavoidable health inequalities and unjust and preventable health inequities. Individuals from different backgrounds, social groups, and countries enjoy different levels of health. Different theories attempt to explain group-level differences in health on the basis of factors such as psychosocial, material deprivation, health behavior, environmental, and selections. This article closes by reflecting on what conditions make health inequalities unjust, and considering the merits of policies that prioritize the elimination of health disparities versus those that focus on raising the overall standard of health in a population.

**Beyond Health Care: The Role of Social Determinants in Promoting Health and Health Equity**
This article from the Kaiser Family Foundation is a summary brief on the role of social determinants in health and health equity. It points out that while it is important to improve access to and the quality of the health care system, research has also found that broad approaches to health problems, which include attention to social, economic, and environmental factors will be necessary going forward. This brief also contains a useful framework of social determinants, organized by social category rather than level of influence. The health policy in this article applies to the United States, though it may be useful for understanding the social determinants of health in a variety of contexts and populations.

**HIV and Sex Workers**
GHELI repository link: [http://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/11112](http://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/11112)
This Lancet Series investigates the complex issues faced by sex workers worldwide, and calls for the decriminalization of sex work, in the global effort to tackle the HIV/AIDS epidemic. With heightened risks of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, sex workers face substantial barriers in accessing prevention, treatment, and care services, largely because of stigma, discrimination, and criminalization in the societies in which they live. Often driven underground by fear, many sex workers encounter or face the direct risk of violence and abuse daily. While these social, legal, and economic injustices contribute to their high risk of
acquiring HIV, sex workers remain underserved by the global HIV response. Additional resources include an infographic on facts about sex workers and the myths that help spread HIV.

**Universal Health Coverage in Latin America**  
GHELI repository link: [http://repository.g heli.harvard.edu/repository/11116](http://repository.g heli.harvard.edu/repository/11116)  
The Lancet Series on Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in Latin America charts the complex political, economic, and social forces that shape health policy making. An accompanying Health Policy paper examines the association between the financing structure of health systems and UHC. In the past few decades, important policies and strategic initiatives in health and development have been embraced by Latin America, with the active participation and support of the Pan American Health Organization, WHO, and other partners. Latin America is a laboratory to study the mechanics of implementing UHC.

**The Social Determinants of Health: It’s Time to Consider the Causes of the Causes**  
This review article surveys a variety of research on how social factors—including income, wealth, and education—are especially important fundamental causes of health. The resources cited within this article would be useful to a student or educator looking for more specific and detailed literature on the social determinants of health.

**Understanding the Social Factors That Contribute to Diabetes: A Means to Informing Health Care and Social Policies for the Chronically Ill**  
This article points out that social determinants of health are found to be linked to the incidence of Type 2 diabetes in the United States. The authors advocate that interventions addressing these social causes are just as important as more popular interventions that currently focus on biological and behavioral factors. They recommend that national legislation related to data collection as part of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 be modified to include data on social determinants. This article helps demonstrate the important overlap between research, data, policy, and health outcomes.

**The Relationship Between Maternal Education and Mortality Among Women Giving Birth in Health Care Institutions: Analysis of the Cross Sectional WHO Global Survey on Maternal and Perinatal Health**  
This article examines maternal education as a key social determinant of maternal mortality, based on data from the World Health Organization Global Survey on Maternal and Perinatal Health. Looking across a large number of women giving birth in hospitals across 24 countries, the study finds that women without any education have a risk of maternal mortality that is 2.7 times as large as that of women with more than 12 years of education. The study shows how one particular social determinant of health, education, can be associated with an important health outcome.

**Social Conditions as Fundamental Causes of Health Inequalities: Theory, Evidence, and Policy Implications**  
This article reviews the concept of fundamental causes of disease, a concept first developed in the 1990s, to
explain the persistent link between mortality and socioeconomic status (see Link and Phelan’s 1995 seminal article, “Social Conditions as Fundamental Causes of Disease,” in this bibliography). This updated look at fundamental causes discusses the limitations of this theory as well as its applicability to health policies that can reduce inequalities.

Social Determinants of Health Discussion Paper Series
GHELI repository link: http://repository.g heli.harvard.edu/repository/12233
This series of papers from the World Health Organization addresses a number of topics related to the social determinants of health, including strategies for governance and tools for capacity building. The papers in this series include useful examples and profiles of specific countries, both rich and poor. Educators can use these examples as small case studies to discuss with their students. A number of approaches to the social determinants of health are also considered, including global, national, and sub-national approaches. Frameworks for understanding social determinants and analyses of specific interventions are also included.

Social Class Differentials in Health and Mortality: Patterns and Explanations in Comparative Perspective
This article provides a comprehensive review of multiple specific social factors, such as education, class, gender, prior life events, and income/wealth, and how they lead to varying outcomes for different social groups. The author encourages a life course perspective for understanding health inequalities. The bibliography of this article may also be useful for more information on this topic.

Social Conditions as Fundamental Causes of Disease
This foundational article provides a look at the underlying social and structural causes of poor health and health inequality that remain constant throughout time, even as technology and healthcare improves. These causes are called the “fundamental causes of disease.” Drawing attention away from the intermediate/proximal causes, which focus on individual-level risk factors or disease vectors within the immediate living environment, the authors point out that fundamental causes of disease, such as socioeconomic status and social support, are always at the base of the causal chain leading to a particular health outcome. See Link et al.’s 2010 article, “Social Conditions as Fundamental Causes of Health Inequalities: Theory, Evidence, and Policy Implications,” in this bibliography for an updated review of this approach.

DATA PUBLICATIONS, PORTALS, AND INTERACTIVES

Global Health Observatory Data
GHELI repository link: http://repository.g heli.harvard.edu/repository/11284
This data portal is the World Health Organization’s (WHO) main health statistics repository. The Global Health Observatory (GHO) provides access to more than 1,000 indicators on priority health topics including mortality and burden of diseases, the Sustainable Development Goals, noncommunicable diseases and risk factors, epidemic-prone diseases, health systems, environmental health, violence and injuries, and health equity. In addition, the GHO provides access to WHO’s analytical reports on the current status and trends of priority health issues, including World Health Statistics, its annual summary of health-related data for member states.

Dollar Street
Social Determinants of Health: Annotated Bibliography

This data visualization portal, a project of Gapminder, documents the stoves, beds, toilets, toys, and other household objects in homes from every income bracket around the world, as a way of making the everyday lives of families on different income levels understandable. Photographers have documented hundreds of homes in 50 countries so far, and in each home the photographer spends a day taking photos of up to 135 objects. All photos are then tagged by household function, family name, and income level, then entered into the interactive website that allows users to browse by income level, country or region, or specific household object. Many of the images give insights into the social determinants of health and allow for easy comparison of conditions across different populations. This tool is an effective, interactive way to introduce students with computer access to the social determinants of health and let them explore to learn more about them.

**Human Development Indicators: Country Profiles**

This 2016 data interactive allows users to explore country profiles from the latest Human Development Report, published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The Human Development Report Office releases five indices each year: the Human Development Index (HDI), the Inequality-Adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI), the Gender Development Index (GDI), the Gender Inequality Index (GII), and the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI). Data used in these indices and other human development indicators included in the interactive are provided by a variety of public international sources. Educators can create exercises and activities in which students examine different countries with the same level of GNI per capita, and compare how they may differ in terms of their Human Development Index (HDI), Inequality-Adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI), Gender Development Index (GDI), Gender Inequality Index (GII), and Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI). These contrasts can be used to stimulate debate and dialogue about government policy priorities.

**Social Determinants of Health Visualization**

This 2015 data interactive tool allows exploration of the relationships between social determinants and health indicators across countries. This first release presents educational attainment for people over the age of 15 for the years 1970 to 2015 by country, year, sex, and age group. Additional determinants and indicators will be added to the tool in subsequent releases. These data are also presented in the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) policy report, *A Hand Up: Global Progress Toward Universal Education*, which documents unprecedented gains in expanding education for all people over the past 50 years. The report presents data on educational attainment over time and across countries in a comparable, comprehensive way.

**MULTIMEDIA AND NEWS**

**Guilty Verdict for Young Woman Who Urged Friend to Kill Himself**

This article about 20-year-old Michelle Carter’s conviction for involuntary manslaughter for urging her boyfriend to commit suicide is a relevant way for educators to discuss social determinants of health with students. It is a very clear example of how a person’s social environment and interactions can impact their health and also shows why social determinants are so important to public health.

**How Social Status Affects Your Health**
This article describes research that investigates the effect of social status within one society on health outcomes. Researchers studying an isolated Bolivian society found that those with lower social status have higher levels of the stress hormone cortisol. This case helps show how a social factor that is not linked to material circumstances can have an effect on a health outcome. Readers may also be interested in the 2014 study by von Rueden CR et al. that this article summarizes.

Social Determinants of Health
This video provides a 22-minute introduction to the social determinants of health by Michael Marmot, one of the pioneers of integrating social factors with health outcomes. The video could be a useful way for instructors to supplement readings or introduce students to social determinants.

Social Determinants of Health
This animated video explains how non-health factors such as location, education, and income promotes a broad understanding of public health. It could help students understand how the social determinants of health can be targeted to create future gains in health.

A Healthy Society
This TED talk by a family doctor examines the relationship between the daily services that health care providers perform and broader society-level behaviors and processes. He uses an example from his own work to demonstrate these connections, and advocates that intervening at the social determinants level is a key action for improving overall public health.

The Hidden Influence of Social Networks
This TED talk by a social scientist examines the organization of human social networks and how one’s social network characteristics, such as how many friends one has and whether those friends have many or few friends, can impact one’s health behaviors or outcomes, such as smoking and obesity.

TEACHING MATERIALS
A Framework for Educating Health Professionals to Address the Social Determinants of Health
GHELI repository link: http://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/11048.
This National Academies report summarizes the proceedings of a workshop on integrating social determinants of health into the education of health care providers, whether they are early-stage students or established professionals. Social determinants of health (SDH) are defined by the World Health Organization as “the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life,” and understanding them has become increasingly critical in an age of surging human migration, armed conflict, and climate change. This workshop, convened by the National Academies, developed a framework, recommendations, and a conceptual model for teaching SDH in partnership with organizations and communities. With a focus on generating awareness and providing accessible knowledge, this summary positions itself at the center of education and health so that the underlying causes of disease and
ill health might be addressed and end the cycle of inequity, disparity, and inequality.

**Kenya’s Social Cash Transfer Program. Millions Saved: New Cases of Proven Success in Global Health**
GHELI repository link: [http://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/10665](http://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/10665)

This case study describes the impact of providing cash transfers to primary caregivers of orphans and vulnerable children in Kenya. The Kenyan government partnered with UNICEF to pilot and expand a monthly cash transfer program to ultra-poor households caring for orphans and vulnerable children. This case describes the collaborative efforts and iterative approach behind the program implementation, health and non-health outcomes for the children, and costs of the program. This case study is part of *Millions Saved: New Cases of Proven Success in Global Health*, a collection of case studies produced by the Center for Global Development.

**Returning to Our Roots: Building Capacity in Public Health for Action on the Social Determinants of Health**
GHELI repository link: [http://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/10747](http://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/10747)

This case study explores the development of organizational capacity to address the social determinants of health in a public health unit. These social determinants are factors outside the traditional health care system—such as income, social status, education, employment, social and physical environments, and culture—that significantly influence our health; they can be protective when evenly available, but often are distributed in ways that are unfair or unjust, acting as risk conditions that disproportionately affect certain populations. The case describes efforts by the Canadian public health sector in translating health equity rhetoric into action and tangible reductions in health inequities. This case includes guidance for instructors, including learning objectives and discussion questions. This case is part of a 13-case collection written by students in the inaugural MPH class of the Schulich Interfaculty Program in Public Health at Western University, Canada.

**Toilets and Sanitation at the Kumbh Mela**
Teaching Case. Holman SR, Shayegan L. Toilets and Sanitation at the Kumbh Mela. Global Health Education and Learning Incubator at Harvard University, Harvard School of Public Health, FXB Center for Health and Human Rights, Harvard University 2014. [http://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/10697](http://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/10697).
GHELI repository link: [http://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/10697](http://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/10697)

This case describes efforts to balance public health concerns with religious and cultural practices of religion pilgrims in India. The Kumbh Mela festival, the largest mass gathering in the world, takes place every 12 years in Allahabad, India. Pilgrims at the 2013 festival followed toilet and water sanitation practices common in South Asia, practicing defecation in both designated areas (contained squat toilets and private “flag” areas for open defecation) as well as public defecation in the sand or by the riverbanks. The construction of the site—and organization of the facilities to support it—follow a detailed system that has developed over decades of close collaborations with national, state, and regional governments and religious leaders, and includes the provision of clean drinking water and public toilets. This case describes efforts by government officials during the 2013 festival to ensure and maintain adequate and appropriate sanitation facilities (toilets and the use of safe drinking water) and the long-term impact of the observed practices on the physical environment. The case introduces students to the conditions and challenges of water and sanitation as it relates to cultural issues (social determinants of health) in global communities with limited resource for optimal health governance.