

## Online resources for assessing and measuring Social Determinants of Health

Local health departments are increasingly recognizing that we must look not only at health outcomes, but at the root causes of poor health by understanding the social and physical conditions in which people live as measures of community health. These conditions affect health and well-being broadly, predisposing some communities to better health and placing obstacles to health for others through unequal distribution of these conditions. Healthy People 2020 [Social Determinants of Health \(SDOH\)](#) describes characteristics of places that can impact health such as “the resources and supports available in our homes, neighborhoods, and communities; the quality of our schooling; the safety of our workplaces; the cleanliness of our water, food, and air; and the nature of our social interactions and relationships.”

As a newer concept in public health, many local health departments are looking for guidance on how to integrate SDOH data into their community health assessments and community health improvement planning (CHA/CHIP). NACCHO has compiled a set of resources to support LHDs seeking answers to commonly asked questions about how to select indicators, access data, and map social determinants of health. Below, you will find websites that provide background and resources for how to approach SDOH and communicate about social determinants of health in the [backgrounders and general resources section](#). Sources of data and indicators are divided into [general](#) and [specialized](#) sources of SDOH indicators. In addition, we have included websites with [mapping tools](#) and some [local examples](#) of data sources and tools used to plan and measure interventions on SDOH.

### Backgrounders and general resources

1. The American Planning Association

<https://www.planning.org/policy/guides/>

The American Planning Association produces knowledge and resources that planners use to make safer, greener, healthier, and more sustainable communities. They offer a list of policy guides for city and regional planning. In particular, the [SmartGrowth policy statement](#) advocates for the development of mixed use, mixed income livable communities and provides resources for planning that promotes public health and equity.

2. Healthy People 2020

<https://www.healthypeople.gov/>

Healthy People provides science-based, 10-year national objectives for improving the health of all Americans. Their website provides these indicators as well as a collection of evidence-based practices for improving health outcomes.

### 3. Human Impact Partners

<http://www.humanimpact.org/>

Human Impact Partners aims to increase the consideration of health and equity in decision-making. They offer free [tools and resources](#) for conducting a health impact assessment (HIA). They also offer training and technical assistance to build the capacity of impacted communities and their advocates, public agencies, and elected officials to take action on the social determinants of health and equity.

### 4. Prevention Institute

<http://www.preventioninstitute.org/>

The Prevention Institute offers many tools to guide communities in implementing collaborative, effective prevention strategies to create safer, healthier, and more equitable communities. Their guide to [health equity metrics](#) is one valuable resource.

### 5. Public Health Institute

<http://www.phi.org/>

PHI generates and promotes research, leadership and partnerships to build capacity for strong public health policy, programs, systems and practices. PHI hosts the [Building Healthy Places Network](#), which supports collaboration across the health and community development sectors. Their [MeasureUp](#) microsite offers resources and tools to help you measure and describe your programs' impact on communities and health-related factors.

## General sources of SDOH Indicators and data

### 1. AARP livability index

<https://livabilityindex.aarp.org/>

The AARP Public Policy Institute promotes development of sound, creative policies to address our common need for economic security, health care, and quality of life. Their Livability Index measures community livability. Users can search the Index by address, ZIP Code, city, or county for livability scores in seven categories for every neighborhood in the US. The Index takes a holistic approach to understanding livability, including the health of residents and the quality of the built environment, but also considers engagement, opportunity, and the natural environment.

### 2. Brookings Institution Metro Monitor

<https://www.brookings.edu/research/metro-monitor/>

The Brookings Institution Metro Monitor measures the performance of the nation's major metropolitan economies in three critical areas for economic development: growth, prosperity, and inclusion. In response to increasing income inequality in U.S. cities, inclusive economies are those that offer opportunities for prosperity across the population. According to the Brookings model, inclusive economies are more equitable, participatory, growing, sustainable, and stable.

### 3. CDC Community Health Status Indicators (CHSI)

<http://wwwn.cdc.gov/communityhealth>

CHSI is an interactive web application that produces health profiles for every county in the United States. Each profile includes key indicators of health outcomes and factors that can influence health outcomes, such as health care access and quality, health behaviors, social factors and the physical environment.

4. CDC data set directory of social determinants of health at the local level

[http://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/docs/data\\_set\\_directory.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/docs/data_set_directory.pdf)

The directory contains an extensive list of existing data sets that can be used to understand social determinants of health. The data sets are organized in 12 categories of the social environment.

5. The Community Indicators Consortium

<http://www.communityindicators.net/>

The Community Indicators Consortium advances and supports the development, availability and effective use of community indicators for making measurable and sustainable improvements in quality of community life. The CIC has an online database of tools for community indicators as well as communities of practice.

6. County Health Rankings and Roadmaps

<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>

The *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps* program is a collaboration between the [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#) and the [University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute](#). The annual *County Health Rankings* measure vital health factors, including high school graduation rates, obesity, smoking, unemployment, access to healthy foods, the quality of air and water, income, and teen births in nearly every county in America.

7. US Census Bureau

<https://www.census.gov/>

Under the U.S. Census Bureau are a range of surveys, data, and visualization tools for learning about the U.S. population.

Within the Census, the American Community Survey (ACS) is an ongoing national survey of U.S. households that provides data to guide the distribution of federal funds. You can access data from the American Community Survey estimates, released every year in a variety of tables, tools, and analytical reports. Data are available at: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/>

## Specialized sources of SDOH Indicators and data

1. AMCHP life course measures

<http://www.amchp.org/programsandtopics/data-assessment/Pages/LifeCourseMetricsProject.aspx>

The Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs (AMCHP) is a national resource, partner and advocate for state public health leaders and others working to improve the health of women, children, youth and families, including those with special health care needs. Through a collaborative process, AMCHP has identified a standardized set of indicators that can be used to

measure progress using the life course approach to improve maternal and child health. The final set of [59 indicators](#) is available here, with guidance on measurement.

## 2. ASCE Report Card for America's Infrastructure

<http://www.infrastructurereportcard.org/>

The American Society of Civil Engineers releases a comprehensive assessment of the nation's major infrastructure categories. It includes recommendations for raising the grades.

## 3. Economic Policy Institute

<http://www.epi.org/>

EPI conducts research and analysis on the economic status of low-and middle-income working Americans and provides policy recommendations. Their website contains datasets and indicators on a range of issues affecting workers.

## 4. Kids Count Data Center

<http://datacenter.kidscount.org/>

A project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT offers data on hundreds of indicators related to child and family well-being in the United States. You can download data and create reports and graphics on the KIDS COUNT Data Center.

## Mapping tools

### 1. Community Health Commons Community

<http://www.communitycommons.org/>

Community Commons offers “data, tools, and stories to improve communities and inspire change.” Their [Community Health Needs Assessment toolkit](#) has a wealth of resources for mapping population demographics for your CHNA, including interactive maps and population-based data reporting tools.

### 2. Community Health Maps

<https://communityhealthmaps.nlm.nih.gov/>

The Community Health Maps blog is a collaborative effort among the National Library of Medicine, the Center for Public Service Communications, and Bird's Eye View to provide information about low cost mapping tools for community organizations. The blog is meant to support both new and experienced GIS mapping users in enhancing their community mapping initiatives, even if they may be using other tools. The blog contains mapping apps/software reviews, best practices, and the experiences of those who have successfully implemented a mapping workflow as part of their work.

### 3. PolicyMap

<https://www.policymap.com/>

PolicyMap offers easy-to-use online mapping with data on demographics, real estate, health, jobs and more in communities across the US. With a paid subscription, you can create custom mapping tools using your own data and indicators in PolicyMap's extensive database.

## Local examples

### 1. Atlanta's Neighborhood Quality of Life & Health Project

<http://www.cgis.gatech.edu/NQOLH/>

The Atlanta Neighborhood Quality of Life and Health (NQOLH) Project provides data and analysis to show that the built environment impacts both quality of life and community health at the neighborhood level, making the case for investments in the built environment to improve quality of life and health. NQOLH is an example of a source of free and open data that allows residents, community groups, planners, and policy-makers to assess community needs and develop data-driven planning strategies. The [Socioeconomic Conditions \(SEC\) Index](#) groups Atlanta's neighborhoods into three categories by community socioeconomic status, given the wealth of research linking SEC to health and quality of life.

### 2. Bay area regional health inequities initiative (BARHII)

<http://barhii.org/>

The Bay Area regional collaborative is dedicated to advancing health equity. They offers a social determinants of health [indicator guide](#) containing 15 SDOH indicator chapters: a table of 72 priority SDOH indicators and their data sources; and technical data appendices. They also have issue briefs on topics such as land use planning, minimum wages, and other topics related to [advancing health equity](#).

### 3. Socioeconomic hardship index, Chicago Department of Public Health

<https://data.cityofchicago.org/Health-Human-Services/Census-Data-Selected-socioeconomic-indicators-in-C/kn9c-c2s2>

The City of Chicago's Data Portal is dedicated to promoting access to government data and encouraging the development of creative tools to engage and serve Chicago's diverse community. The site hosts over 200 datasets presented about city departments, services, facilities and performance. This dataset contains a selection of six socioeconomic indicators of public health significance and a "hardship index" for the years 2008 – 2012.

### 4. Virginia Commonwealth University Center on Society and Health

<http://www.societyhealth.vcu.edu/>

The VCU Center on Society and Health in Richmond, VA studies the health implications of social factors such as education, income, community environmental conditions, and public policy. They have [several interactive tools and publications](#) demonstrating links between social factors and health.

**For more information** about NACCHO's work around Social Determinants of Health and Healthy People 2020, please contact the Performance Improvement team at [accreditprep@naccho.org](mailto:accreditprep@naccho.org).