

Health Equity Definitions

Source	Definition
RWJF, WHO	<p>Association for American Medical Colleges (AAMC) Health Equity Inventory (HEI) FAQ</p> <p>‘Health equity’ or ‘equity in health’ is the ideal that everyone has a fair opportunity to attain their full health potential and that no one should be disadvantaged from achieving this potential. Health equity is the absence of avoidable, unfair, or remediable differences among groups of people, whether those groups are defined socially, economically, demographically, or geographically or by other means of stratification.</p>
WHO, Braveman (2014), Jones (2014)	<p>American Medical Association (AMA)/AAMC</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Defined by the WHO as “the absence of avoidable, unfair, or remediable differences among groups of people, whether those groups are defined socially, economically, demographically or geographically or by other means of stratification. ‘Health equity’ or ‘equity in health’ implies that ideally everyone should have a fair opportunity to attain their full health potential and that no one should be disadvantaged from achieving this potential.” 2) Other valuable definitions include that of Paula Braveman: “Health equity is the principle underlying a commitment to reduce—and, ultimately, eliminate—disparities in health and in its determinants, including social determinants. Pursuing health equity means striving for the highest possible standard of health for all people and giving special attention to the needs of those at greatest risk of poor health, based on social conditions. ... Health equity means social justice in health (i.e., no one is denied the possibility to be healthy for belonging to a group that has historically been economically/socially disadvantaged).” 3) Another is from Camara Jones: “Health equity is assurance of the conditions for optimal health for all people. Achieving health equity requires valuing all individuals and populations equally recognizing and rectifying historical injustice, and providing resources according to need.”
RWJF	<p>EVMS Strategic Plan Glossary</p> <p>Health equity. The state in which everyone has the opportunity to attain full health potential and no one is disadvantaged from achieving this potential because of social position or any other socially defined circumstance. Promoting health equity means creating the conditions where individuals and communities have what they need to enjoy full, healthy lives. Health equity is different from health equality. Equity recognizes differences and attempts to counteract unequal individual opportunities. Equality provides everyone the same thing, regardless of their unique needs.</p>
—	<p>Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)</p> <p>Not formally defined</p>
RWJF	<p>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)</p> <p>Health equity is the state in which everyone has a fair and just opportunity to attain their highest level of health. Achieving this requires ongoing societal efforts to: address historical and contemporary injustices; overcome economic, social, and other obstacles to health and health care; and eliminate preventable health disparities.</p>

WHO, self	<p>CommonHealth ACTION</p> <p>Equity: Providing all people with fair opportunities to attain their full potential to the extent possible.</p>
Healthy People (self)	<p>Healthy People</p> <p>Health equity is the attainment of the highest level of health for all people. Achieving health equity requires valuing everyone equally with focused and ongoing societal efforts to address avoidable inequalities, historical and contemporary injustices, and the elimination of health and health care disparities</p>
RWJF, WHO, self	<p>Johns Hopkins Center for Health Equity (JHCHE)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) When every person has the opportunity to attain their full health potential. We achieve health equity by eliminating avoidable, unfair, or remediable health differences among populations, whether defined socially, economically, demographically, or geographically. 2) <u>Health equity</u> is about more than individuals or individual behavior; it’s also about the history and context of places and systems. It’s about system-level factors contributing to inequities in health and opportunities – to experience educations, work, safe housing, and clean environments. [Followed by RWJF bicycle analogy.]
Healthy People, RWJF, self	<p>Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF)</p> <p>Health equity generally refers to individuals achieving their highest level of health through the elimination of disparities in health and health care. Healthy People 2020 defines health equity as the attainment of the highest level of health for all people, and notes that it requires valuing everyone equally with focused and ongoing societal efforts to address avoidable inequalities, historical and contemporary injustices, and health and health care disparities. CDC defines the achievement of health equity as when every person has the opportunity to “attain his or her full health potential” and no one is “disadvantaged from achieving this potential because of social position or other socially determined circumstances.”</p>
—	<p>National Institutes of Health (NIH)</p> <p>Not formally defined</p>
RWJF (self)	<p>Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF)</p> <p>Health equity means that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible. This requires removing obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination, and their consequences, including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care.</p>
self	<p>Virginia Commonwealth University Office of Health Equity (VCU OHE)</p> <p>Not formally defined. References AMA/AAMC guide.</p>
self	<p>Vanderbilt University Medical Center Office of Health Equity (VUMC OHE)</p> <p>Health Equity is both the elimination of systemic obstacles and the creation of opportunities for all to be healthy.</p>
WHO (self)	<p>World Health Organization (WHO)</p> <p>Health equity is defined as the absence of unfair and avoidable or remediable differences in health among population groups defined socially, economically, demographically or geographically.</p>

Health Inequity Definitions

Source	Definition
—	AAMC HEI FAQ Not formally defined
Braveman & Gruskin (2003) , Braveman (2014)	AMA/AAMC Differences in health outcomes that are systematic, avoidable, unnecessary, unfair and unjust.
—	EVMS Strategic Plan Glossary Not formally defined
—	Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) Not formally defined
—	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Not formally defined
Braveman & Gruskin (2003)	CommonHealth ACTION Inequity: A difference or disparity between people or groups that is systematic, avoidable, and unjust.
—	Healthy People Not formally defined
—	Johns Hopkins Center for Health Equity (JHCHE) Not formally defined
self	Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) Health and health care disparities refer to differences in health and health care between groups that stem from broader inequities. There are multiple definitions of health disparities.[See <i>health disparities</i> section below].... The terms “health inequality” and “inequity” also are used to refer to disparities. Racism, which CDC defines as the structures, policies, practices, and norms that assign value and determine opportunities based on the way people look or the color of their skin, results in conditions that unfairly advantage some and disadvantage others, placing people of color at greater risk for poor health outcomes.
—	National Institutes of Health (NIH) Not formally defined
Braveman & Gruskin (2003)	Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) A health inequity is a particular kind of health disparity that is not only of concern for being potentially unfair, but which is believed to reflect injustice.
Braveman & Gruskin (2003)	Virginia Commonwealth University Office of Health Equity (VCU OHE) Refers to AMA/AAMC guide
—	Vanderbilt University Medical Center Office of Health Equity (VUMC OHE) Not formally defined

self	World Health Organization (WHO) Health inequities are systematic differences in the health status of different population groups. These inequities have significant social and economic costs both to individuals and societies.
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Health Disparities Definitions

Source	Definition
—	AAMC HEI FAQ Not formally defined
self	AMA/AAMC Refer to a higher burden of illness, injury, disability or mortality experienced by one group relative to another. In some uses, including in Healthy People 2020, the term is explicitly linked to economic, social or environmental disadvantage but in many cases the term is used to refer to simple mathematical differences (and as such, has fallen out of use in contemporary health equity discourse). Health “inequities,” in contrast, are explicitly defined as health differences that are avoidable, unnecessary, unfair and unjust. As used in public health and medicine, the term health disparities often ignores the historical context, political processes and unjust nature of some health outcomes, thereby preventing a structural analysis of root causes.
Healthy People	EVMS Strategic Plan Glossary Health disparities. A particular type of health difference that is closely linked with social, economic, and/or environmental disadvantage. Health disparities adversely affect groups of people who have systematically experienced greater obstacles to health based on their racial or ethnic group; religion; socioeconomic status; gender; age; mental health; cognitive, sensory, or physical disability; sexual orientation or gender identity; geographic location; or other characteristics historically linked to discrimination or exclusion.
self	Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) Healthcare disparities are differences in access to or availability of medical facilities and services and variation in rates of disease occurrence and disabilities between population groups defined by socioeconomic characteristics such as age, ethnicity, economic resources, or gender and populations identified geographically.
self	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Health disparities are preventable differences in the burden of disease, injury, violence, or opportunities to achieve optimal health that are experienced by populations that have been disadvantaged by their social or economic status, geographic location, and environment. Many populations experience health disparities, including people from some racial and ethnic minority groups, people with disabilities, women, people who are LGBTQI+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, or other), people with limited English proficiency, and other groups.
—	CommonHealth ACTION Not formally defined
Healthy People (self)	Healthy People A health disparity is a particular type of health difference that is closely linked with social, economic, and/or environmental disadvantage. Health disparities adversely affect groups of people who have systematically experienced greater obstacles to health based on their racial or ethnic group; religion; socioeconomic status; gender; age; mental health;

	cognitive, sensory, or physical disability; sexual orientation or gender identity; geographic location; or other characteristics historically linked to discrimination or exclusion.
—	Johns Hopkins Center for Health Equity (JHCHE) Not formally defined
CDC, Healthy People	Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) Health and health care disparities refer to differences in health and health care between groups that stem from broader inequities. There are multiple definitions of health disparities. Healthy People 2020 defines a health disparity as, “a particular type of health difference that is closely linked with social, economic, and/or environmental disadvantage” and notes that disparities, “adversely affect groups of people who have systematically experienced greater obstacles to health based on their racial or ethnic group; religion; socioeconomic status; gender; age; mental health; cognitive, sensory, or physical disability; sexual orientation or gender identity; geographic location; or other characteristics historically linked to discrimination or exclusion.” The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identifies health disparities as, “preventable differences in the burden of disease, injury, violence, or opportunities to achieve optimal health that are experienced by socially disadvantaged populations.” A health care disparity typically refers to differences between groups in health insurance coverage, access to and use of care, and quality of care. The terms “health inequality” and “inequity” also are used to refer to disparities. Racism, which CDC defines as the structures, policies, practices, and norms that assign value and determine opportunities based on the way people look or the color of their skin, results in conditions that unfairly advantage some and disadvantage others, placing people of color at greater risk for poor health outcomes.
Healthy People	National Institutes of Health (NIH) A health disparity (HD) is a health difference that adversely affects disadvantaged populations, based on one or more of the following health outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher incidence and/or prevalence and earlier onset of disease • Higher prevalence of risk factors, unhealthy behaviors, or clinical measures in the causal pathway of a disease outcome • Higher rates of condition-specific symptoms, reduced global daily functioning, or self-reported health-related quality of life using standardized measures • Premature and/or excessive mortality from diseases where population rates differ • Greater global burden of disease using a standardized metric
Healthy People	Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) Health disparity and health inequality are synonyms; disparity is used more often in the United States, while other countries use inequality. For over 25 years in the fields of public health and medicine, they have referred to plausibly avoidable, systematic health differences adversely affecting economically or socially disadvantaged groups. This definition does not require establishing that the disparities/ inequalities were caused by social disadvantage; it requires only observing worse health in socially (including economically) disadvantaged groups. Health disparities/inequalities are how we measure progress toward health equity. Health equity is the underlying principle that motivates action to eliminate health disparities/inequalities.
—	Virginia Commonwealth University Office of Health Equity (VCU OHE) Not formally defined

—	Vanderbilt University Medical Center Office of Health Equity (VUMC OHE) Not formally defined
—	World Health Organization (WHO) Not formally defined

Social Determinants of Health Definitions

Source	Definition
WHO	AAMC HEI FAQ Not formally defined, references WHO
Baker et al. (2005), WHO	AMA/AAMC Refer to the underlying community-wide social, economic and physical conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. They affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks. These determinants and their unequal distribution according to social position, result in differences in health status between population groups that are avoidable and unfair.
National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NAS)	EVMS Strategic Plan Glossary Social determinants of health. These determinants, which are environmental, economic, and cultural, are the conditions in which one lives, learns, works, plays, worships, and ages. These conditions are shaped by historical and contemporary policies, law, governance, investments, culture, and norms. Addressing the root causes of health inequities, such as the social determinants of health, is important in part to help enable sustainable interventions by engaging multiple sectors and addressing multiple health outcomes simultaneously.
WHO	Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) Social determinants of health (SDOH) are defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) External Link Disclaimer as the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age.
WHO	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Social determinants of health (SDOH) are the nonmedical factors that influence health outcomes. They are 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. These forces and systems include economic policies and systems, development agendas, social norms, social policies, racism, climate change, and political systems.
—	CommonHealth ACTION Not formally defined
Healthy People (self), Baker et al. (2005)	Healthy People Social determinants of health (SDOH) are the conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks.
—	Johns Hopkins Center for Health Equity (JHCHE) Not formally defined
WHO	Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) Social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age.
—	National Institutes of Health (NIH) Not formally defined

self	Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) ...the conditions in which children, families, single adults, and aging populations live, and the resources and services available to them... [excerpt]
—	Virginia Commonwealth University Office of Health Equity (VCU OHE) Not formally defined
—	Vanderbilt University Medical Center Office of Health Equity (VUMC OHE) Not formally defined
WHO (self)	World Health Organization (WHO) The social determinants of health (SDH) are the non-medical factors that influence health outcomes. They are 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. These forces and systems include economic policies and systems, development agendas, social norms, social policies and political systems.