



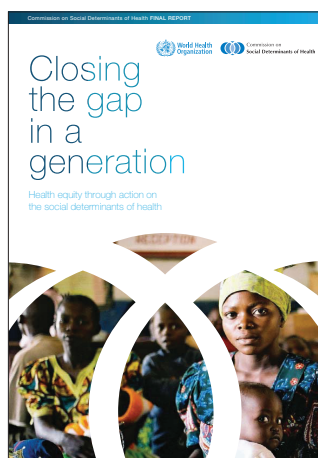
National Collaborating Centre  
for Determinants of Health

Centre de collaboration nationale  
des déterminants de la santé

## FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS IN HEALTH EQUITY: A CURATED LIST

Over the past two decades, there has been a flurry of national and international studies focused on understanding how the inequitable distribution of social and economic conditions (e.g., housing, income, work, social inclusion) creates a significant gap between the healthiest and the least healthy in society.

We've selected seven documents that have significantly informed our understanding of the connections between the social determinants and population health, in Canada and in other parts of the world. These publications have influenced the strategic direction of many Canadian public health actions, and continue to fuel our efforts to reduce health inequities. NCCDH staff members recommend these documents for people who want to learn more about the broad context of health equity work.

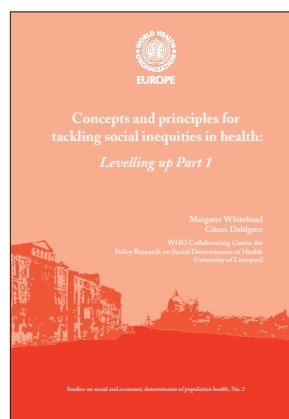


### [Closing the gap in a generation](#)

*World Health Organization.  
[2008].*

This final report of the WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health presents evidence demonstrating that health is determined in large part by the political, social, and

economic forces that shape the conditions in which people grow, live, work, and age. The report argues that avoidable health inequalities are unjust, and makes three overarching recommendations to improve health equity: 1) improve daily living conditions; 2) tackle the inequitable distribution of power, money, and resources; and 3) measure and understand the problem and assess the impact of action.



### [Concepts and principles for tackling social inequities in health. Levelling up. Part 1](#)

*Whitehead, M. and Dahlgren, G.  
[2006].*

The World Health Organization's Collaborating Centre for Policy Research on Social Determinants of Health asked Whitehead

and Dahlgren to revisit ground-breaking work they did in the early 90s to raise awareness and stimulate public debate on the elusive topic of health equity. This concise and comprehensive paper proposes 10 principles for policy action to advance health equity, and in the process clarifies key concepts like "social gradient" and "levelling up." The authors have written a companion document- European strategies for tackling social inequities in health: Levelling up Part 2 (2006) in which they present evidence about the nature and extent of health inequities in Europe, and offer policy options to tackle the problems.

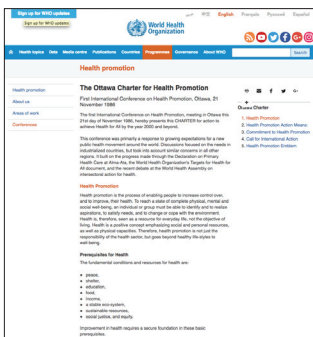


[Fair society, healthy lives: The Marmot review. Strategic review of health inequalities in England post-2010](#)

*The Marmot Review. [2010].*

This report summarizes the findings of a two-year, independent review, chaired by Sir Michael Marmot, head of the University

College London (UCL) Institute of Health Equity, and former Chair of the WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health. It proposes evidence-based policies and a monitoring framework to address health inequalities in England. The authors propose six policy objectives, including 1) give every child the best start in life; 2) create fair employment and good work for all; and 3) create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities. The report's 20 recommendations point to the importance of involving organizations and governing structures outside the health sector.

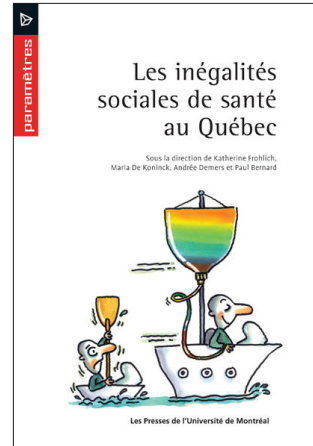


[Ottawa charter for health promotion](#)

*World Health Organization. [1986].*

The Ottawa Charter is a global health milestone, and remains a vital reference for health promotion work

around the world. The Charter identifies five strategies to achieve health for all by 2000 and nine prerequisites: peace, shelter, education, food, income, a stable ecosystem, sustainable resources, social justice, and equity.

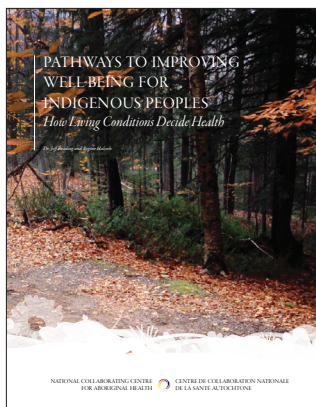


[Les inégalités sociales de santé au Québec](#)

*Edt. by Frohlich, K.; De Koninck, M.; Demers, A.; & Bernard, P. [2008]. This resource is available in French only.*

This report is the first province-wide study of why the most disadvantaged populations experience

close to 15 fewer years in good health than the most affluent. This report was published with support from the Québec Research Network on Public Health. It paints a portrait of social inequalities in health using the evolution of premature mortality as an example. It also introduces several theoretical perspectives—anthropological, neurobiological, and sociological—to help us understand how social inequalities in health develop. The report describes existing and potential interventions and public policies that could help reduce these inequalities.



**Pathways to improving well-being for indigenous peoples: How living conditions decide health**

Reading, J., & Halseth, R. [2013].

This report provides an overview to how the health of Aboriginal peoples in Canada is negatively affected

by the socio-economic determinants of health. The authors draw on research and health status data to document what is known about the interrelated effects of factors like income, education, employment, and social inclusion on the health of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. The authors make a strong case for paying attention to the foundational impacts of colonization, and for conducting research focused on finding and supporting holistic, life-course interventions.



**Social determinants of health: The Canadian facts**

Mikkonen, J., & Raphael, D. [2010].

This book offers extensive data pointing to the unfair distribution of the social determinants of health in Canada. The authors describe the impact of this

inequity, and offer recommendations to improve population health through action on an off-cited list of 14 social determinants.

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health (NCCDH)  
St. Francis Xavier University  
Antigonish, NS B2G 2W5  
nccdhd@stfx.ca  
tel: (902) 867-5406  
fax: (902) 867-6130  
www.nccdhd.ca  
Twitter: @NCCDH\_CCNDS

The National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health is hosted by St. Francis Xavier University.

Please cite information contained in the document as follows:

National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health. (2014). *Foundational documents in health equity: A curated list*. Antigonish, NS: National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health, St. Francis Xavier University.  
ISBN: 978-1-987901-52-8

Production of this document has been made possible through a financial contribution from the Public Health Agency of Canada through funding for the National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health.

The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of the Public Health Agency of Canada.

This document is available in its entirety in electronic format (PDF) on the National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health website at: [www.nccdhd.ca](http://www.nccdhd.ca).

La version française est également disponible au [www.ccnds.ca](http://www.ccnds.ca) sous le titre *Documents de fond sur l'équité en santé : une liste de lectures essentielles*.