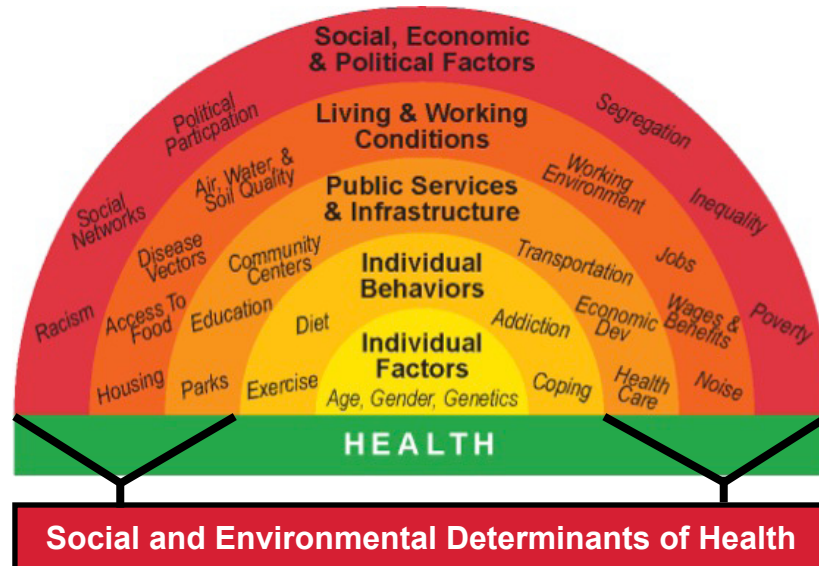


Northwest HIA Network Factsheet Series: Supporting Health in All Policies

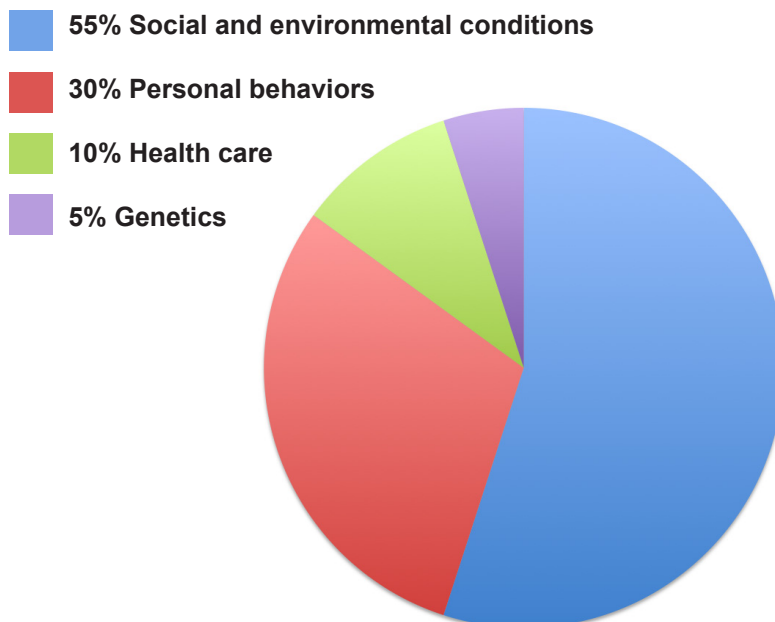
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This factsheet was developed with support from a grant from the Health Impact Project



Adapted from: McGinnis, J. M., Williams-Russo, P., & Knickman, J. R. (2002). The case for more active policy attention to health promotion. *Health Affairs*, 21(2), 78-93.

Health is more than what happens in your doctor's office. Where you live may have a stronger influence than your genes when it comes to your health. Our social context and environmental factors determine our health (figure above)¹. If essential supports beyond health care are missing in your neighborhood – like clean air, safe places to be active, access to healthy foods, and affordable homes – you may get injured or become sick. Communities are healthier when decision makers have a better understanding of how decisions that affect our environments affect health.



www.who.int/social_determinants/thecommission/finalreport/en/

What accounts for differences in health?

The World Health Organization's 2008 Commission on the Social Determinants of Health found that more than half of world-wide differences in health outcomes could be explained by the environments in which people live, work, and play. Our individual choices are based on the options available. Developing communities with health supports can improve the odds that all Oregonians reach their full health potential.

¹ Whitehead, M. & Dahlgren, G. (1991). What can we do about inequalities in health? *The Lancet*, 338, 1059-1063.

HIA: An Innovative Prevention Strategy

As a society, we often make transportation, housing, land use, and other decisions without considering their health implications. For example, asthma is a chronic condition that can be exacerbated by factors beyond any one individual's control, such as air pollution. If a transportation, land use, or housing development decision results in unintended consequences such as increased air pollution in a neighborhood with many asthmatic children, this can have economic and social costs that may multiply over time. The CDC estimates that Oregon spent \$411 million on asthma in 2010. Identifying possible effects before decisions are made can prevent harm, improve health, and reduce costs.

Policies affect health

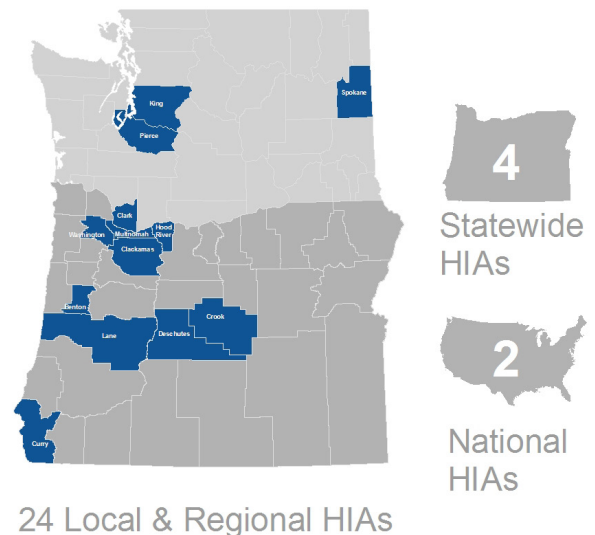
- Transportation
- Education
- Housing
- Land Use
- Agriculture
- Energy
- Parks, open spaces

What is Health Impact Assessment?

Health Impact Assessment (HIA) helps promote health and avoid unintended consequences by ensuring that health is considered before major decisions are made. HIAs use a structured process that includes synthesizing evidence from different disciplines, stakeholder input, and current data to understand current conditions and potential health effects. This information enables decision makers to develop evidence-based approaches to promote health for all.

Benefits of HIAs

- Grow collaboration across sectors to solve complicated challenges
- Engage affected communities and leaders
- Apply comprehensive information including public health expertise, community experience, business input, and scientific data to improve public health
- Identify practical methods to support health
- Develop recommendations to maximize benefits and minimize risks
- Promote health, equity, and sustainability



The National Research Council defines HIA as “a systematic process that uses an array of data sources and analytic methods and considers input from stakeholders to determine the potential effects of a proposed policy, plan, program or project on the health of a population and the distribution of those effects within the population. HIA provides recommendations on monitoring and managing those effects.” The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the US Department of Health and Human Services, and the Environmental Protection Agency all recommend HIA as a tool for improving health in the United States.