

# Social, Cultural, and Economic Determinants of Well-Being

Subjects: Social Issues

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Individual well-being is influenced by a number of economic and social factors that include income, mental health, physical health, education, social relationships, employment, discrimination, government policies, and neighborhood conditions. Well-being involves both physical and mental health as part of a holistic approach to health promotion and disease prevention. The well-being of a society's people has the potential to impact the well-being and productivity of the society as a whole. Though it may be assessed at the individual level, well-being becomes an important population outcome at the macro level and therefore represents a public health issue.

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The term well-being is universally known but few may truly understand the impact of well-being on everyday life. Some may view well-being very simply as indicative of happiness and life satisfaction. Others may be unaware of the impact of well-being on health. Definitions of well-being vary based on socioeconomic status, education, nationality, gender, race/ethnicity, and political ideology. The World Health Organization defines positive mental health as a state of well-being in which the individual realizes their own abilities, can cope with normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to their community <sup>[1]</sup>. It seems logical that having a purpose in life would add meaning to one's existence. That purpose could include the type of job a person is engaged in, or the nurturing of children, or possibly the care of a disabled loved one <sup>[2]</sup>. While there is no consensus definition of well-being, there appears to be a generally accepted agreement that well-being includes positive feelings <sup>[3]</sup>. In addition, there are a number of dimensions of well-being, including physical well-being, social well-being, emotional well-being, economic well-being, life satisfaction, psychological well-being, eudaimonic well-being, community well-being, and subjective well-being. Regardless of the definition used or the dimension measured, well-being is associated with a number of social and economic outcomes.

The concept of subjective well-being refers to how people experience and evaluate their lives, specific domains, and activities in their lives. Experienced well-being refers to people's feelings during a particular moment in life, whereas evaluative well-being represents a person's general assessment of their life based on recall of a particular period in their life. The two subjective measures of well-being are likely to provide different results compared to more objective measures, such as the gross domestic product (GDP).

Whether measured individually via subjective surveys, such as the WHO-5, or through the use of objective measures, such as GDP, household income, unemployment levels, or neighborhood crime, well-being metrics provide policy makers with important data for the development or discontinuation of social policies. Of greater importance is how the measurement, tracking, and promotion of well-being can be used in disease prevention and health promotion. According to the Center for Disease Control, well-being has been found to be associated with the following <sup>[3]</sup>:

- Longevity,
- Self-perceived health,
- Healthy behaviors,
- Mental and physical health,
- Social connectedness,

- Productivity.

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## References

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