

# Social and health inequalities in new zealand



**ASSIGN  
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## A. DEMOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATIONS

According to the statistics of New Zealand, 86% of the entire population are settling in the Urban Areas which are further categorized into 72% living in the main urban area, 6% in the secondary urban area and the remaining 8% in the minor urban area, while, 14% of the country's population resides in the rural area. If we are to relate this to the people's access to health, it is safe to say that those in the urban areas have better access to health care services and intervention compared to those in the rural area. This is made possible because the urban area offers better job opportunities as well as social and educational potentials thus opening the minds of the urban dwellers to the importance and access to health services. Apart from this, the development of the urban areas is gearing towards a place with opportunities of physical activities and social interaction and green space.

In comparison to the opportunities that the urban dwellers enjoy with regard to the access of health services, the rural dwellers have limited access.

Although health services are available in the area, transportation to go to health centres and facilities might be an issue thus requiring more time and money for them to enjoy the health services. Apart from these, the job opportunities in the rural areas are limited thus most of the income of the household would go to housing and basic necessities thus putting health as the least of their priorities if not, not at all.

## B. POLITICAL VALUES

The political values of a person are acquired through the process of political socialisation. In New Zealand, just like any country, people acquire their political values from their immediate family (initially, the parents), from school, the media, friends, work, travel and from their own personal experiences. (Levine, 2012)

Political values can be a determinant to health planning, implementation and evaluation of interventions in the sense that the importance or the value that the government places on the overall health of the country will affect the budget and quality and efficiency of health services that they are willing to provide to their people.

Democracy, the Rule of Law, protection by government, fairness and equality and honesty are some of the political values that are common among New Zealanders and this goes with the value that the government places on health which this country considers as one of its top priority. For this reason the New Zealand Ministry of Health is continuously finding the ways and means to disseminate information regarding health services that are available for their communities and making access to these services easier for their people without discrimination.

### C. RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

Researches and studies have been conducted through the years and there is a significant relationship between health and a person's religion. Religious practices in some cases relates to healthy living, how one perceives illness and death and these could sometimes be a hindrance to receiving the

necessary health interventions that the public and/or health professionals might deem necessary.

The majority of the country's population are Christians, roughly 44.3% and in general there are no restrictions on the diet, although some would practice fasting, such as abstinence from eating meat during the holy week or during Fridays. Some would also abstain from eating before receiving the Holy Communion. Views and stand on family planning may vary from one religion to the other but there are no restrictions on organ transplant and/or blood transfusions. As a person belonging to the Roman Catholic religion, I can say that my religious belief and practices are not much of a determinant to health but in order to be healthy, one must possess the knowledge, information and the determination to live a healthy lifestyle and receive appropriate health interventions.

On the other hand the Buddhist and the Islam which makes up 1.4% and 1.1% respectively of the population have restrictions in their diet. The Buddhists maintain a healthy and simple lifestyle and are vegetarian and Islam as well, has a "no-pork" diet thus both religion have a diet that is mostly of vegetable which is a much healthier food group. According to the New Zealand Ministry of Health, Ischemic Heart Disease is the leading cause of mortality and this is a disease that is highly associated with diet and lifestyle.

#### D. HUMAN VALUES

There are a number of human values and the values that are important to one person vary from each other although a number of people may value the same things. The set of values one holds may change with time and age.

To make a much clearer explanation of the impact of human values on health, I will use the human value of respect. Respect may just be a simple word but it is of great importance in life general. I will start with the respect of life. When we value and respect the life that we have we will try to take care of it and we can then relate this with the value that we place on health. One way of respecting the body that we have is to take care of it by living a healthy lifestyle which would also include a healthy diet and make use of the necessary health interventions that would aid in the promotion, improvement and maintenance of health and one's well-being.

#### E. ETHNICITY

In New Zealand 44% of the population is of European Ethnicity, with 14.1% is of Maori descent, 11.3% of Asian descent, 7.6% of Pacific Island descent, 1.1% comprises the Latin American, Middle Eastern, African, while 1.6% are of another descent with 5.4% that is not stated or unidentified.

The ethnicity a person belongs to also influences how he or she sees health in all its aspect. In this section, I will consider the statistics on unemployment and relate it to health planning, implementation and intervention. As of 2013, the highest rate of unemployment is among the Maori which is 12.1%, then followed by the Pacific with a rating of 11.8% and the least among the Europeans which is only 4.9%. With income comes the capability and finances to acquire the necessities of daily living. When a household have

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enough income then they can easily access health care interventions and they can have the sufficient funds to pay for items that may be beneficial to health like the right nutrition, physical activities and recreations, education, etc.

## F. TRADITIONS

Traditions too have an impact on the health of the people. These are the set of practices and beliefs that are handed down from one generation to the other. These practices may highly affect how one views health, the health practices and interventions that they are willing to accept. Like the tradition of the Moko (tattoo) of the Maori, this is done originally with the use of a range of uhi (chisels) made from the albatross bone but now it is done with the use of tattoo machine, this might pose some danger to health putting oneself susceptible to the transmission of disease through the needles use and also there might be instances for one to have an allergic reaction from receiving ta moko.

It has been a part of the tradition of the pacific people to have the extended family living in the same home. To them this is the unity of a family. This might be an advantage to some point because family members can look after one another but on the other end, this might pose to be a health determinant. Based on the statistics the Pacific Islanders have a high rate of employment thus this would mean that they have less if not no source of income to have a suitable home for the entire family. In this case, then the house would not have the space enough for everyone, thus when living conditions are not good this would be a determinant to health, viral

infections can easily be transmitted from one family member to the other and also the right nutritional food intake may not be achieved with a limited source of income that is to be shared with a number of people.

## TASK 1. 2

### 1. PUBLIC CONCEPT OF HEALTH

As the country's trend of population changes so does the concept of health for every nation. During the earlier years health was not given much of an importance. It was limited to the family and not the community. But as the years go by, there has been a major discovery in the field of medicine and the identification of new illness and diseases that may be related to the changes in environment and lifestyle.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century marks the time when health is viewed by the public not as a simple issue but has been a shared endeavour. Health issues have been given the right attention that it deserves, and approaches have become multi-sectoral and multidisciplinary.

In general majority of Kiwis are now becoming health conscious giving rise to the shift of non-meat diet, organic diet as well as health awareness and maintenance programs and activities. Schools are now encouraging children to participate in sports and incorporate in their curriculum health awareness activities. This attitude towards health has a positive impact on the planning and implementation of health. Health programs are being catered to the needs of the public as well as these programs and services are becoming holistic in nature, it tries to address issues not just on physical health but as well as psychological, social and spiritual health of the public.

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## 2. PUBLIC CONCEPT OF ILLNESS

Since the public now is becoming more and more concern on health, they have come to view illness as something that should be prevented. People now slowly understand the effects of illness, people views illness as a destroyer, it isolates you from society and makes you incapable of doing the things that will make them normal or accepted in the community.

To some people, when they experience a certain illness, this is not the end of everything. People continue to have the hope that they can still live a normal way of living despite of their illness and that there are interventions that can health them in doing so.

Now illness is not just seen by the public as something that comes with age, but rather people are now more aware that some illnesses are a result of our lifestyle that includes the food we eat, the activities we do and even the environment that we dwell in.

## 3. IMPORTANCE OF HEALTH

Health plays a vital role in our day to day activities, for people here in New Zealand and elsewhere. Health is not only limited to the physical aspect of life but also the psychological, social and spiritual state of the body. All these aspects of living are interrelated with each other therefore they must reach level of balance.

“ Better health is central to human happiness and well-being. It also makes an important contribution to economic progress, as healthy populations live longer, are more productive, and save more.” (World Health Organization, 2015)

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The statement of the WHO is true in every sense of its words. When a person is in his prime of health this would mean that he has the mind and body to function and fulfil his duties and responsibilities to himself and his community. A healthy being will possess the capabilities to be productive and an asset to the society. A healthy mind and body will also mean less susceptibility to diseases and illness thus he will be able to save the time and money spent on health services and interventions. For this reason the planning and implementation of health is not limited to curing the disease or illness but rather on prevention and maintenance of healthy mind and body.

#### 4. ATTITUDE TOWARDS HEALTH AND MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS

I believe that the attitude one has towards health and the medical professionals is highly related from personal experiences. A positive experience will have a positive impact on how one values health and medical professionals and negative experiences will yield to negative response.

To cite an example, I will use communication as a factor. The Maori has their own dialect and for older people they might not have a wide range of English vocabulary. In instances when they access health care there is high probability that the health issue that they are trying to convey to the health professionals may not be properly understood, as a result, the health problem that the Maori is experiencing is not addressed therefore this would be a negative experience for the Maori. Since the Maori culture is family-oriented, the negative experience may be shared among family members thus developing a negative attitude towards health and medical professionals. Cases like these has a negative impact on the planning and implementation of health intervention because this would make it hard for

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the public to take advantage of and trust the health services that it would be beneficial or good for them, keeping a close mind about health because of their bad personal experience with health and health professionals. Goals and objectives of health programs might not also be achieved.

### TASK 1. 3

New Zealand is a country that has a diverse culture, it is home to a number of ethnic groups. It has an ageing population but at the same time an increasing number of migrants becoming citizens. Although the rate of unemployment is minimal basing from the entire population but the rate remains high in some ethnic group. Traditions that are being practiced by different ethnic groups also differ and may in one way or another affect health. The interaction between all these factors will have a major impact on the planning and implementing of health interventions in New Zealand. The planning of health interventions should examine all aspects of health that needs attention and who should be the major recipients. It should not only be limited to one group but should extend to everybody. In the implementation stage, it must consider how fast and efficient it can be delivered to the public without discrimination. The social and cultural factors will also help in determining the health issues that needs utmost prioritization. These health interventions should not be general in nature but be as personalized and holistic as possible in order to achieve the set goals and objectives as well as for everyone to reach their optimum health status.

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