

HIGHLIGHTS

Advancing & Transforming the Social Determinants of Health in the Olympic Region



Olympic Community of Health (OCH) engaged Collaborative Consulting to look at how adverse social conditions across the region are impacting health and explore where there are opportunities for region-wide, collaborative interventions.

OCH and Collaborative Consulting conducted an environmental scan, literature review, and took stock of available data. The findings from these activities provided a wide perspective of the various social risk factors and their impact on community health.

Identifying and addressing social conditions that negatively impact health is a priority of OCH. This report is one step in a broader palette of work to support partners in addressing issues no single sector or tribe can tackle alone.

OUR HEALTH IS SHAPED BY SOCIAL CONDITIONS

Interconnected factors that impact health:^{1, 7-9}



It is estimated that **80%** of what creates health is shaped by social conditions in which we live, learn, work, and grow.¹⁻⁶

The term “social determinants of health” is often misinterpreted as being negative or applying to only select groups of people. Everyone’s health, however, is shaped by their social conditions. For some it is positive while for others it is negative.

Terminology:²

Social determinants (SDoH): The conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age that affect a wide range of health, functional, and quality of life outcomes and risks.

Social risk factors: Adverse social conditions that create risk for health, such as poor housing or unstable social relationships.

Social needs: These differ from social risks by emphasizing the individual’s priorities and preferences of which social interventions they most need and want.

THE HERE AND NOW

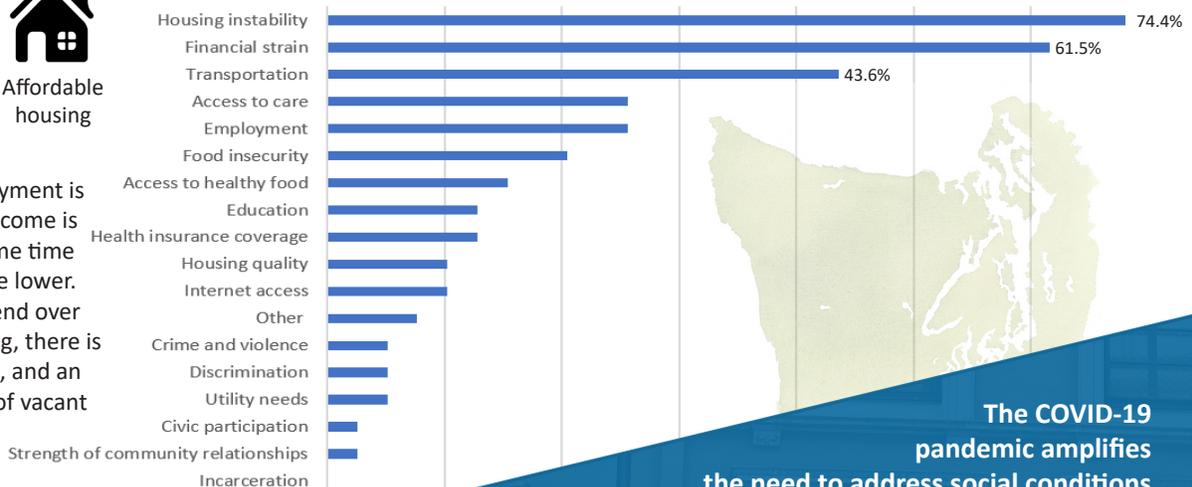
OCH and Collaborative Consulting surveyed different partners across the Olympic region to better understand the social needs and social conditions that are negatively impacting health.

Major needs in the Olympic region:



Relative to WA state, unemployment is higher and public assistance income is more prevalent, and at the same time median household incomes are lower. Roughly 1/3 of households spend over 30% of their income on housing, there is an affordable housing shortfall, and an exceedingly small percentage of vacant homes in the region.^{14, 15}

Dominant social needs in the Olympic region (OCH assessment)



The COVID-19 pandemic amplifies the need to address social conditions

Across the country COVID-19 is exacerbating social risk factors for millions, including the loss of employment (and health coverage loss), worsening food insecurity, and increasing housing instability, and increase in behavioral health needs.

“The needs of the community are even more dire. People that were already on the brink now have become unemployed.”

OCH Partner

Record layoffs from pandemic¹³

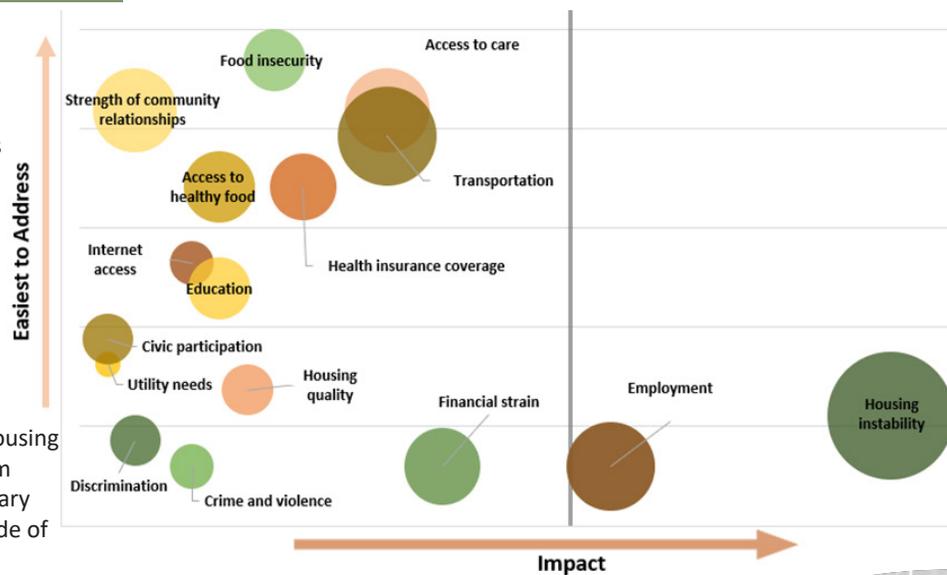


Partner Priorities for Action

Partners were asked to describe their vision for the future related to addressing adverse social conditions. What emerged is a picture of using partnerships to enhance existing activity to address immediate needs while simultaneously implementing upstream strategies to address social conditions driving these needs.

The graph to the right displays partner priorities regarding ease, potential impact, and benefit from regional response (circle size). Housing instability and employment were identified as social risk factors that would have both great impact and benefit from a regional response.

Oftentimes intervention efforts focus on reacting to immediate social needs, such as providing temporary housing or food, without ever making their way further upstream to prevent the needs. While these activities are necessary and will benefit the individual there are a multitude of opportunities to prevent social needs.



“There has to be a collective approach within the community. Coming together and working on the same goals.”

Community-Based Organization

Specific areas partners want to see enhancements:

- Expand eligibility and increase flexible funding for existing programs.
- Enhance referral systems and processes to better connect people to community resources.
- Increase data sharing and communication between clinical and community partners.
- Increase mental health and substance use disorder services.

Specific areas partners want to see new strategies implemented:

- Address the underlying conditions of employment, housing, and education.
- Increase employment opportunities and establish employment programs.
- Increase access to and availability of affordable housing.
- Support community driven efforts to address adverse conditions.
- Support local capacity and self-sufficiency to respond to community needs.

“We believe that the continued support of community collaboration provided by the OCH is integral to improving the social and health needs of community members in our region.”

Primary Care Provider

“I hope that client’s families can access services much earlier in their process. They can go to someone in the community, sit down, discuss what is going on, come up with a plan, and receive appropriate referrals.”

Behavioral Health Provider

WAYS TO ADVANCE PARTNERSHIP

Multi-partner initiatives addressing adverse social conditions are emerging across the country and offer many ideas to adapt and apply to the Olympic region. Over 75 multi-partner initiatives were reviewed, 25 of which were profiled in more depth (see *Initiatives to Improve Social Conditions* report to learn more).

Four categories of organizing structures emerged from the initiatives reviewed:

Programmatic partnership: Partnerships formed around interventions focused on specific social needs.

Community connectors: Non-profit organizations that coordinate local interventions, manage a coalition of partners, and leverage funding streams towards unified goals.

Anchor organizations: Universities, hospitals, and other enduring organizations that use their prominent role in local economies to improve the health of the communities where they are based.

Community-wide initiatives: Place-based initiatives that address a broad range of upstream social conditions through an integrated portfolio of investments for long-term sustained change.

Initiatives showing promise share the following elements:

Mobilize a broad range of partners

Utilize an integrator organization

Design & partner with community

Coordinate funding from multiple sources

Invest in data sharing

Take a long-term view

OCH can serve as a vehicle to:

- Identify collaboration activities and align partners around shared vision and strategy.
- Coordinate partners to maximize resources.
- Build collective power to advocate for funding.
- Facilitate communication and decision making among partners.
- Provide staff, infrastructure, and data support to manage cross-partner efforts.

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