



# Inequities in Health in Iceland

Abstract from the 2019 report *Ójöfnuður í heilsu á Íslandi. Ástæður og árangursríkar aðgerðir*

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## Abstract

Despite the general improvement in the health and well-being of the world's population in recent decades, there are still inequities in health across countries, regions, and social groups. This inequity is not decreasing. This has been demonstrated in the analytical work of the European Office of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Nordic Welfare Centre (NVS). In addition, numerous other organizations and experts have given detailed accounts of health inequities.

When data from the Health and Well-being survey was analyzed with regard to inequities, the results were consistent with the results of the WHO and NVS. They indicate that inequities in health exist between social groups in Iceland. Those with less education or more difficulties making ends meet generally have less favorable health outcomes and lifestyles compared to those with more education and are better off financially. There are indications that these health inequities have increased in many cases between 2012 and 2017.

Equity is a key objective of the United Nations' sustainable development goals, where neither individuals nor groups are left behind. The same applies to Icelandic health policy and European health policy. It is important to pay more attention to health inequities, take responsibility for the problem, understand it, and implement solutions to reduce it.

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Report: [Ójöfnuður í heilsu á Íslandi. Ástæður og árangursríkar aðgerðir](#)

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According to the WHO, certain social factors have the greatest impact on health inequities, such as lack of financial security and social protection, as well as lack of safe housing and adequate living conditions. Actions within health services alone are not sufficient to achieve profound changes in health inequities. All areas of the public sector must get involved and share responsibility for creating a health-promoting environment for the citizens. Research shows that the most significant changes in health inequality can be achieved through government actions outside the health system. Actions that ensure general education and financial security significantly impact whether people have the necessary resources to cope with the challenges of daily life.

Before implementing new policies and actions in any area, it is important to formally assess their possible impact on public health and health equity. It is no less urgent to evaluate the impact of measures that have already been implemented.