

WHAT IS POPULATION HEALTH?

A BETTER APPROACH TO BETTER HEALTH



UH Population Health
UNIVERSITY OF **HOUSTON**

SPRING
2023

What is Population Health?

Population health is an interdisciplinary field focusing on the “the interrelated conditions and factors that influence the health of populations over the life course, identifies systematic variations in their patterns of occurrence, and applies their resulting knowledge to develop and implement policies and actions to improve the health of those populations”.¹ These populations can be bounded by geography and/or categorized by characteristics such as occupation, familial dynamics or structure, political affiliation, socioeconomic position, ethnic or racial group membership, gender identity, physical or mental ability, and patient status. Population health is shaped by multiple drivers that include biology, behavior, clinical care, genes, physical environment, and social factors. A robust body of literature indicates that genes and health care account for 10% and 20% of health outcomes, respectively. The remaining seventy (70%) can be attributed to the physical environment, social factors, and personal health practices. Population health focuses on the independent impact of each driver and how they interact and operate collectively to influence health outcomes.

UH Population Health Foundational Themes.

UH Population Health is a university-wide initiative to advance population health-related interdisciplinary education, partnerships, and research to enhance quality of life in our city, state, and region. The initiative is founded upon five strategic themes that align with the University of Houston’s overarching goal to become a top 50 public research university, outlined in the university’s strategic plan, *Together We Rise, Together We Soar*.



Figure 1. UPHH Strategic Themes Aligned with UH Strategic Plan Goals 1-3

At UH Population Health, we pursue **student success** (Goal 1) through **transformative learning**, **strengthening** the **connectivity** across faculty and students to create **actionable discoveries** and **inclusive interventions** contributing to UH’s **research impact on our region** (Goal 2) and promoting equitable and inclusive strategic partnerships to help **communities thrive** through social responsibility (Goal 3).

¹ Dunn JR, Hayes MV. Toward a lexicon of population health. *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 1990;90 (Supplement 1): S7-S10.

UHPH seeks to impact:

1. **Interdisciplinary education and training:** Incorporate interdisciplinary courses and training into students’ educational experiences through selective partnerships across colleges and disciplines to provide a top-tier and inclusive education that produces “triple-threat” graduates. Triple-Threat graduates obtain a college degree while 1) completing a long-term project, 2) in an academically-linked population health-related internship, and 3) earning industry-recognized credentials.
2. **Multi-sector partnerships:** The University of Houston operates in a complex ecosystem that extends beyond our campus community. Thus, cultivating mutually beneficial partnerships with leaders across the private and public sectors is vital to improving the quality of life in Houston, Texas, and our region. Multi-sector partnerships also provide the natural space for UH graduates to practically apply their knowledge and skills.
3. **Innovative research:** Research at UH Population Health uses a set of empirical approaches that examine systematic differences in outcomes across populations, consider complex interactions among drivers, specify biological pathways linking drivers to population health outcomes, and identify the influence of different drivers over the life course.¹

We need *your* help and ideas.

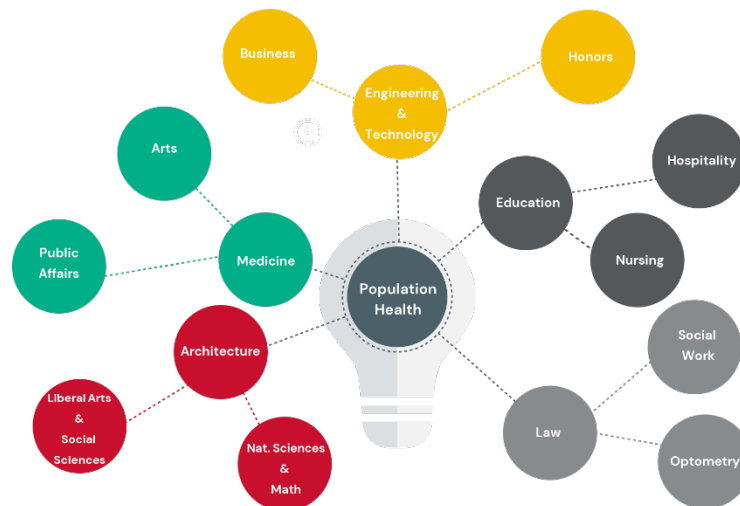


Figure 2. UHPH, Links and Connects

UH Population Health is launching the UH Population Health Faculty Survey to take stock of who is doing research and teaching population health-related topics. The data will serve UH Population Health to convene faculty to design and implement potential collaborations to reach our goals.

¹ Keating DP, Hertzman C. *Developmental Health and the Wealth of Nations: Social, Biological and Educational Dynamics*. New York: Guilford Press; 1999.

Adler N, Marmot M, McEwen B, Stewart J. Socioeconomic status and health in industrial nations: social, psychological, and biological pathways. *Annals of the New York Academic of Science* 1999;896.