Vulnerable Populations

Definition

Vulnerability refers to the degree to which a population or individual is susceptible to harm or neglect influenced by both inherent (e.g., age, sex, race) and acquired (e.g., health behaviors, environment, sociocultural behaviors) risk factors.

Vulnerable Populations are groups and communities at a higher risk for poor physical, psychological, or social health. These barriers are further intensified due to social, economic, political, and environmental components. Limitations due to illness or disability can also influence the vulnerability of a population.

Why are they Vulnerable?

Barriers and Limitations impact the vulnerability of a group or individual. Both can involve inherent or extrinsic factors.

Inherent risk factors are innate, meaning individuals are born with these characteristics. Examples include sex, race or ethnicity, age, and genetics.

Acquired risk factors are extrinsic or exposure-related. Examples include socioeconomic status, health behaviors, physical surroundings, and sociocultural settings.

Who are Vulnerable Populations?

Minority Groups
- Racial or Ethnic minorities
- Sexual or Gender minorities (LGBTQIA+)

Economically Disadvantaged
- Homeless populations
- Low-income populations
- The uninsured

Chronically Ill or Groups Living with Disabilities
- Populations living with HIV/AIDS
- Populations living with chronic mental health disorders
- Substance users

The Elderly, Children, and Mothers

Immigrants
- Migrants
- Refugees

Rural Residents
- Limited access to healthcare services due to residence

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About the Texas Epidemic Public Health Institute (TEPHI)

TEPHI is a new state agency dedicated to preparing Texas for the next infectious disease outbreak by strengthening the capacity and resiliency of all Texas communities to respond to future epidemics. Through our work, we aim to serve as a national model of regional epidemic preparedness and lay the groundwork for a coordinated and collaborative response.

Learn more at tephí.texas.gov