

EQUIP-AD - A Canadian guidance framework for integrating social determinants of health in aging and Alzheimer's disease research

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Background

Certain communities, including ethnic and cultural minorities, face higher dementia rates and worse outcomes, largely driven by structural and social determinants of health (SSDH).¹

Social determinants of health: the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age.

Structural determinants of health: the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life.²

Problem

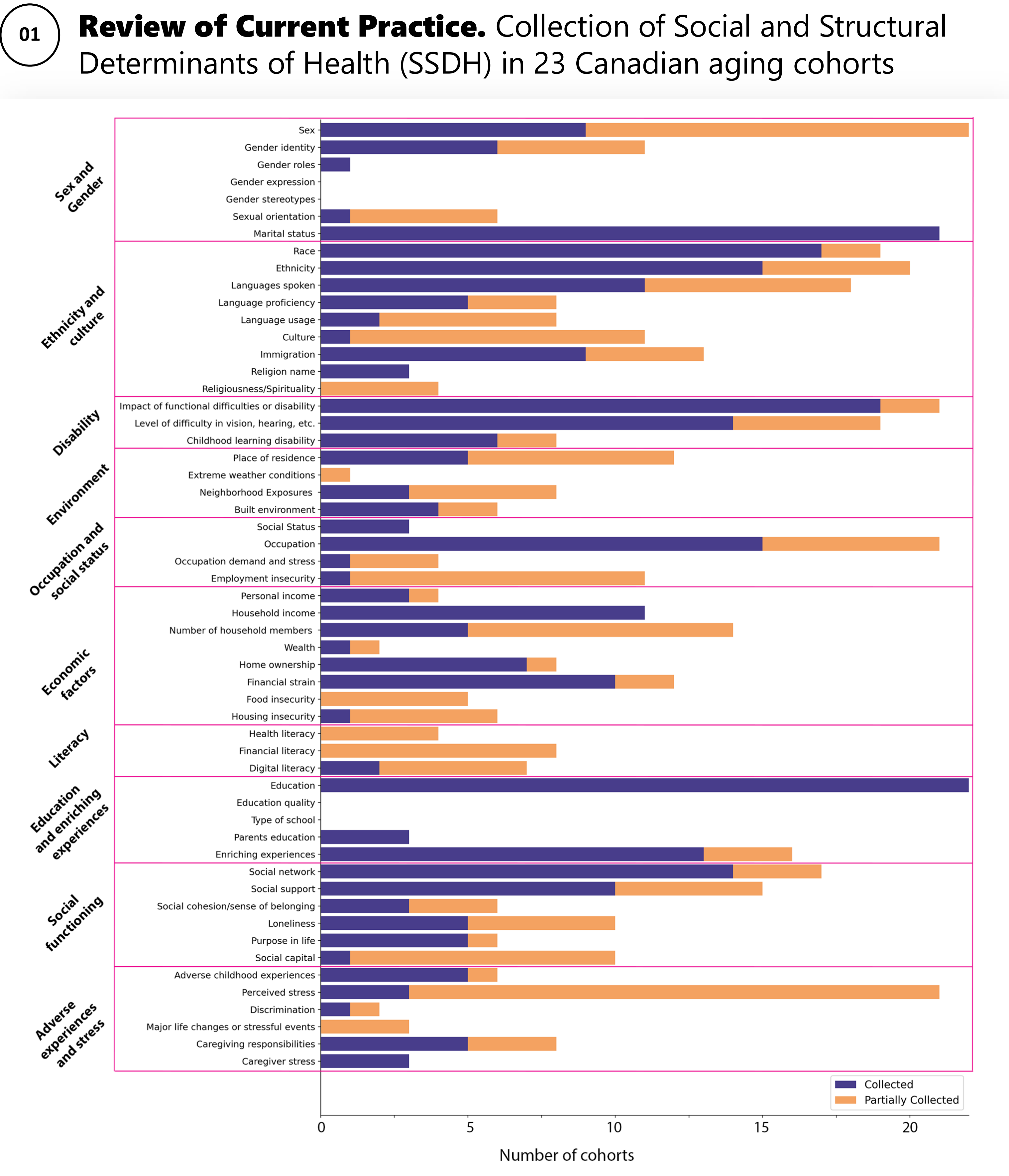
- 1) SSDH are not integrated consistently in aging and dementia research
- 2) We lack specific guidelines for their inclusion in aging and dementia studies

Objectives

- 1) Create guidance for the appropriate integration of SSDH in studies of aging and dementia
- 2) Provide a tool that allows researchers to efficiently select and download the SSDH measures relevant to their research

Process

- 01 Review of current research practices – *Which SSDH are collected in studies?*
- 02 National public survey – *Which factors impact people's health the most?*
- 03 Community advisory board engagement – *What are the factors that matter most to communities?*
- 04 Delphi study – *Which SSDH experts think should be prioritized?*



02 **Public Survey (n= 605)**

Top factors:

- Income and financial security
- Stress due to major life events
- Daily stress
- Food insecurity
- Housing insecurity

04 **Delphi Study (n = 27)**

Top factors:

- Race
- Sex
- Level of difficulty in vision, hearing, etc.
- Education
- Ethnicity
- Access to health care
- Social support
- Discrimination
- Gender identity
- Place of residence
- Food insecurity
- Housing insecurity
- Caregiving responsibilities
- Social participation

03 **Community advisory board (CAB)**

Priorities: Economic factors, Stress, Discrimination and stigma, Health literacy, Barriers to healthcare access, Access to cognitively enriching resources

Collection of SSDH per category

- Disability, Ethnicity and culture, Social functioning
- Environment, Literacy, Economic factors, Adverse experiences and stress

* The area of each bubble represents the extent to which each category is characterized in these studies.

Main results:

Conclusion

There is a persistent disconnect between what people identify as key health determinants and what researchers actually measure. While the public, community advisors, and experts each emphasized different priorities, economic security, stress, and health literacy emerged as recurring themes. These factors remain poorly and inconsistently captured in aging and dementia cohorts. EQUIP-AD aims to address this gap by providing researchers with actionable, community-informed guidance for SSDH integration.

Tell us what you think our guidance should look like!

References

1 Adkins-Jackson et al. (2023). The structural and social determinants of Alzheimer's disease related dementias. *Alzheimer's & Dementia*, 19(7), 3171–3185. <https://doi.org/10.1002/alz.13027>

2 World Health Organization (n.d.). Social determinants of health. https://www.who.int/health-topics/social-determinants-of-health#tab=tab_1