

Hope Street Group's Economic Opportunity Index

Health and Social Safety Net: Brief on Major Findings

Hope Street Group launched its Economic Opportunity Index (EOI) in April 2008 to provide the basis for an evidence-based discussion about how much opportunity Americans have today compared to their opportunities 25 years ago.

We wanted to answer these questions:

- How does opportunity compare across gender and racial groups?
- What will matter most in ensuring opportunity in America in the future?

The EOI clearly demonstrates the interconnected nature of drivers impacting economic opportunity. The EOI points to health as one of the most important drivers in economic opportunity, making up almost one-fourth of the total drivers that impact economic opportunity.

Our research has shown that health is impacted by three main categories of drivers: educational attainment; access to health care and healthy lifestyle choices; and social ties and safety nets:

- Studies show that those who are more educated are healthier and live longer, even after controlling for other factors:
 - Educational attainment drives almost one-third of the health outcomes in individuals in America;
 - If Hispanics were to achieve the same educational attainment levels as whites, their health outcomes would improve by 27%.
- Access to health care and healthy lifestyle choices make up almost another third of the drivers:
 - Infant mortality rate
 - Historically, African Americans have had the highest infant mortality rates of any race in the United States:
 - Cutting the African American infant mortality rate by half will increase health outcomes by 10%;
 - If the African American infant mortality rate were the same as that for Asian Americans, African Americans would improve their health outcomes by 13%.
 - Smoking
 - 1/3 of the net health improvement over the past 27 years has been due to lower smoking rates;
 - If Asian Americans had the same smoking rate as Hispanics, they would diminish their health outcomes by 7%.

- Diabetes
 - Cutting the diabetes prevalence among African American women by 50% will improve their health outcomes by 6%.