



Unhealthy Societies: The Afflictions of Inequality

By Richard G. Wilkinson

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Unhealthy Societies: The Afflictions of Inequality By Richard G. Wilkinson

Among the developed countries it is not the richest societies which have the best health, but those which have the smallest income differences between rich and poor. Inequality and relative poverty have absolute effects: they increase death rates. But why? How can smaller income differences raise average life expectancy?

Using examples from the USA, Britain, Japan and Eastern Europe, and bringing together evidence from the social and medical sciences, *Unhealthy Societies* provides the explanation. Healthy, egalitarian societies are more socially cohesive. They have a stronger community life and suffer fewer of the corrosive effects of inequality. As well as inequality weakening the social fabric, damaging health and increasing crime rates, *Unhealthy Societies* shows that social cohesion is crucial to the quality of life.

The contrast between the material success and social failure of modern societies marks an imbalance which needs attention. The relationship between health and equality suggests that important social needs will go unmet without a larger measure of social and distributive justice. This path-breaking book is essential reading for health psychologists, sociologists, welfare economists, social policy analysts and all those concerned with the future of developed societies.

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Editorial Review

Review

'Unhealthy Societies is much more than another book on inequalities in health - it provides an elegantly argued treatise on the problems facing contemporary societies ... It is a methodologically sophisticated, yet inherently readable book ... This scholarly and insightful book is recommended reading for all students of sociology and economics, as well as health policy-makers and politicians.' - *Times Higher Educational Supplement*

'Essential reading for medical sociologists, it is thought provoking, stimulating and accessible.' - *Medical Sociology News*

'For those interested in a saner, fairer, safer and healthier society, Richard Wilkinson's book, which merits more than one reading, is potentially epoch-making...sane, humane, compelling counter-arguments to Thatcherism and the 'me, now, society'.' - *For those interested in a saner, fairer, safer and healthier society, Richard Wilkinson's book, which merits more than one reading, is potentially epoch-making...sane, humane, compelling counter-arguments to Thatcherism and the 'me, now, society'.*'

'Fascinating ... it is impossible not to be impressed by the sheer scale of the enterprise undertaken by Richard Wilkinson, both in the magnitude of the question addressed and the extraordinary diversity of evidence he brings to bear on the issue ... a work of major significance.' - *Sociology of Health and Illness*

'One of the key social scientific texts of the decade ... a treasure trove of useful information, especially about the major consequences of income disparity in a community or society. Politicians, physicians and social scientists should somehow be required to read it and tested for comprehension ... should be required in every professional and social science educational programme. Its impact will be profound for years to come ... the importance of this book cannot be overstated.' - *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*

'Unhealthy Societies is a challenging and refreshing book. By looking at health from a quality of life rather than a strictly medical angle it enables readers to examine health in its broadest and most intricate social context.' - *Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths Newsletter*

'The message of this book is exactly what the country needs to hear ... an engaging passionate work of social responsibility ... a timely and exciting book.' - *The Friend*

'I have no hesitation in recommending this book to those working and training in public health, especially those with an interest in the psycho-social causes of illness.' - *Professor David R Phillips, in the Journal of Public Health Medicine*

About the Author

Richard G. Wilkinson is Senior Research Fellow at The Trafford Centre for Medical Research, University of Sussex.

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Ryan Wysocki:

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Christopher Pruett:

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