

What Can be Explained by Measuring the Public Health Capital of Counties, Parishes, and Districts

What patterns of local government spending improve the health of a population? Is it similar in rural and urban areas? This presentation examines 3,000 US county budgets to analyze spending patterns related to county health. It proposes that social spending could be a crucial factor in determining the health of populations, and that social determinants of health can be managed by local governments. The talk discusses the theory of health investments by people and governments and presents empirical research to explore the association between county government spending across multiple sectors and life expectancy at birth (LEB). The data for the study comes from the U.S. Census Bureau and the Current Population Survey. The findings suggest that counties prioritizing investments in infrastructure have significantly greater gains in life expectancy while focusing on law and order spending is associated with lower health. The results from this research can inform how county governments can redirect spending allocations to benefit the health of their constituents.