

The Social Context of Social Problems To learn about social problems, how they develop, and how people work together to deal with them, it is important to understand their context: the essential features of the societies in which they arise: 1. A major aspect of social structure is social stratification, which refers to inequality among people with regard to important social factors including access to education, income, property, power, and prestige. For example, a child born into a family in the wealthiest one percent of the population is likely to be educated in private high schools where tuition and fees often equal or exceed the cost of attending America's top universities. A social institution is a continuing pattern of social relationships intended to fulfill people's basic needs and aspirations and carry out functions essential to the operation of society. Conditions generated by institutions may become social problems. 2. 3. 4.