

Active Living Research

Using Evidence to Prevent Childhood Obesity
and Create Active Communities

ARTICLE SUMMARY

February 2013

Not All Parks Are Created Equal

Introduction

Parks are great places for people to be physically active. Unfortunately, not all communities have equal access to enough good quality parks. This study examined socioeconomic and racial/ethnic disparities in park availability, park features (e.g., basketball courts, water fountains, benches, playgrounds, trails, lighting), and overall quality of parks throughout Kansas City, Mo.

Key Findings

Lower-income neighborhoods had significantly more parks than affluent neighborhoods, but lower-income neighborhoods were less likely to have playgrounds and also expressed greater concerns about park quality. Parks in predominantly White neighborhoods were more likely to have restrooms, while parks in mostly minority communities contained more basketball courts but had fewer trails. Higher income areas had more playgrounds per park than poorer neighborhoods.

Methods

We collected data on race/ethnicity and income on 174 census tracts in Kansas City and measured park availability using GIS data. We assessed park features and quality using the Community Park Audit Tool. The tool can be found online here: <http://www.activelivingresearch.org/node/12700>.

Implications

Although lower-income and minority neighborhoods did not have less access to parks, the findings indicate that other types of park inequalities may exist, namely in specific types of park resources. These findings are important because both park features and quality can significantly affect use, enjoyment, and physical activity within parks and ultimately levels of obesity and chronic disease in low-income and diverse neighborhoods. Future research should examine policies that might mitigate disparities in park availability, features, and quality across communities.

SOURCE

Vaughan, K.B., et al. (2013). Environmental Justice and Physical Activity: Exploring the Distribution of Park Availability, Features, and Quality across Kansas City, Missouri. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, 45(1Suppl): S28-S38.

Open access to the full text article is available at:

<http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12160-012-9425-y>

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