**Do All Children Have Places to be Active?**

Childhood obesity is one of the country’s most significant health problems. Many efforts to prevent childhood obesity aim to make it easier for children to be active in their communities. Neighborhoods that have well-maintained sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and parks and recreation resources, and that are clean and safe from crime and traffic, generally promote more physical activity. Yet many communities of color and lower-income communities lack such features and amenities.

This fact sheet highlights research showing that racial and ethnic minorities and lower-income people live in environments that make being active more difficult and less appealing. These disparities contribute to the low rates of physical activity and higher rates of obesity among children of color and lower-income children.

**Lower-income communities and communities with more residents of color generally lack clean and well-maintained sidewalks, trees, appealing architecture and nice scenery factors that promote walking and other forms of physical activity.**

- Across the nation, 81 percent of American Indian-Alaskan Native women and 54 percent of African-American women reported that their neighborhoods lack sidewalks, compared with 47 percent of White women.¹
- A 2001 study found that enjoyable scenery was the most important factor in promoting physical activity among lower-income adults, yet they were nearly 16 percent less likely than higher-income adults to have attractive scenery in their neighborhoods.²
- In North Carolina, American Indians were significantly less likely to live in communities with sidewalks and streetlights than Whites. They were also significantly less likely to be active.³

**FAST FACTS**

- Racial and ethnic minority and lower income children are more likely to be overweight or obese.²³
- Lower-income and African-American communities have significantly less parks and green spaces than White and wealthier communities.²⁴
- African-American and Latino adolescents are more likely to live in high-crime areas than are White teens.²⁵

This fact sheet highlights findings from the research synthesis, *Do All Children Have Places to Be Active? Disparities in Access to Physical Activity Environments in Racial and Ethnic Minority and Lower-Income Communities.*

Full research synthesis is available at: [http://www.activelivingresearch.org/disparities](http://www.activelivingresearch.org/disparities)

For more information on Active Living Research, visit: [www.activelivingresearch.org](http://www.activelivingresearch.org)
Lower-income people and racial and ethnic minorities who do not have enough access to parks and recreational facilities are less likely to be active.

- A national, two-year assessment found that communities with higher poverty rates and those that were predominantly African-American were significantly less likely to have parks and green spaces than communities that are more affluent and White.4
- In 2006, adolescents in mostly lower-income and racial and ethnic minority areas were half as likely as those in mostly White and more affluent areas to live close to at least one public or private recreational facility.5
- A large national study showed that youth living in areas with less recreational facilities were less likely to be active and more likely to be obese than youth in neighborhoods with more recreational facilities.6

Lower-income people and racial and ethnic minorities are more likely to live in areas with higher crime rates and more physical and social disorder. These conditions make it difficult for residents to be active.

- People with lower incomes, and racial and ethnic minorities, are more likely than Whites and more affluent people to live in areas with high crime rates,7, 8, 9,10 and to perceive their neighborhoods as less safe.11, 12, 13, 14,15
- They also are more likely than Whites and more affluent people to experience physical and social disorder in their neighborhoods, such as broken windows, litter, graffiti, loitering and public drinking,16,17,18, 19, 20
- A 2009 study showed that African-American and Latino adolescents are more likely to live in high-crime areas than are White teens. This study also found that neighborhoods with more serious crime generally had residents who were less active overall.21
- In Chicago, youth living in neighborhoods with more social disorder were less physically active.22

Summary

Research shows that lower-income and racial and ethnic minority people tend to live in neighborhoods with fewer and poorer quality sidewalks, fewer parks and open spaces, and more crime, social disorder and traffic. These environmental and social factors are partially responsible for the low rates of physical activity and higher rates of obesity among lower-income communities and communities of color. Policymakers, advocates and practitioners must pursue strategies that improve walkability; increase access to parks, green space and recreational facilities; and improve neighborhood safety.


6 Ibid.


24 Powell L, et al., “The Relationship between Community Physical Activity Settings and Race, Ethnicity and Socioeconomic Status.”