

Research Brief

Characteristics of neighborhoods that influence the physical activity of Latino adults in Massachusetts

Overview

Latinos in the United States have high rates of obesity, type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. Moving more and sitting less can help people reduce their risk of developing these conditions.

Nationally, however, almost 60% of Latino adults are not physically active for more than 150 minutes a week as recommended by the American College of Sports Medicine. Latino adults also sit (are sedentary) for more than 74% of the time that they are awake, doing things like watching TV, using a computer, or driving/riding on a bus or train. In order to help Latinos move more and sit less, it is important to better understand why they are not as physically active as recommended by learning more about their lives and neighborhoods.

Main Questions

- Among Latino adults, what are neighborhood characteristics are related to physical activity?
- Among Latino adults, what neighborhood characteristics are related to sedentariness, or time spent sitting?

Study

The Lawrence Health and Well Being Study of surveyed 602 Latino adults in the city of Lawrence, Massachusetts. Using a community based participatory approach, the study was conducted by the City of Lawrence Mayor's Health Task Force, the Lawrence Senior Center, the YWCA of Greater Lawrence, the Greater Lawrence Family Health Center and the University of Massachusetts Medical School. Study participants were selected to answer survey questions, including demographic characteristics (age, gender, education, employment, education, history of smoking), physical activity (including walking), sedentary behavior (time spent sitting while doing different activities such as watching TV, using the computer, riding in a car or bus) and environment (safety, walkability, and attractiveness of the neighborhood, availability of healthy foods, relationships with neighbors). Data was analyzed using the SPSS software.

The Bottom Line

The Latino adults in this study were likely to meet the physical activity guidelines of walking more than 150 minutes per week if the neighborhood was more walkable, such as with sidewalks. Adults were more sedentary if they did more things with neighbors. It is important to note that the study did not find that there was an association between the physical characteristics of a neighborhood and time spent sitting.

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Spotlight on Results

- Living in more walkable neighborhoods was associated with an increased likelihood of being physically active for at least 150 minutes per week (OR=1.403, p=.018)
- Greater frequency of activities with neighbors was associated with greater sedentary behavior ($\beta = -.072$, p=.05)

Call for Action

Changes to make a neighborhood more walkable, such as improving sidewalks and making sure there are safe places to walk, may increase the physical activity of Latino adults. Interventions that encourage Latinos to do be physically active together may help them to move more.

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Source

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