



Social and environmental determinants of health in the region

There are several social and environmental conditions necessary for good health and quality of life: affordable, quality housing; quality education; clean air and water; access to parks and nature; access to affordable, healthy foods; and neighborhoods that promote physical activity.

In our three-county region, these conditions vary greatly from place to place. Two groups who fare poorly in social and environmental conditions are those with low-incomes and people of color. The Regional Equity Atlas (CLF, 2007) shows several trends that contribute to health disparities in this region:

Demographics

The region is becoming more diverse. Since 1990:

- The number of Latinos in Portland tripled.
- Asian Americans increased from 3.8% to 7.0% of the population.
- Native Americans increased from 0.8% to 1.1% of the population.

North/Northeast Portland is a predominantly African American area that has a large concentration of children living in poverty. Poverty rates are increasing in parts of East Portland, Gresham, Hillsboro and Vancouver.

Housing

Displacement of African Americans to eastern parts of Multnomah County and Vancouver, WA over the last 10 years was caused by rapid increases in the cost of housing in N/NE Portland.

The affordability of single family housing has outpaced inflation. The average household income of \$51,000 could not support the purchase of the average home at \$232,000 in 2005.

In Multnomah County, the home ownership rate for Whites is 60%, compared with 28% for Latinos, 37% for African Americans, and 36% for Native Americans. (2000 U.S. Census)

Neighborhoods on the outskirts of the city to which residents are being displaced are not as well served by transit than the central city and have the lowest sidewalk coverage around schools, which is a barrier to physical activity in children.



Education

School districts in Oregon get 39% of funding from property taxes, which means that the wealthiest neighborhoods have the highest paid teachers and the most resources.

The poorer schools in the region also have poor walking access, a barrier to physical activity in children.

Air Pollution

North Portland neighborhoods near I-5 have air pollution rates twice as high as the Multnomah County average, with diesel particulates 800 times the national level of acceptable risk. The lifetime cancer risk due to diesel soot for a resident of Multnomah County is 1 in 1,455. This risk is 687 times greater than the EPA's acceptable cancer risk level. This translates to 86 premature deaths, 88 non-fatal heart attacks, 1,744 Asthma attacks, 52 chronic bronchitis cases, 11,056 Work Loss Days and 63,716 Minor restricted activity days. (Clean Air Task Force website)

Access to parks and natural spaces

Neighborhoods high in poverty or populations of color have worse access to public parks in the region, with neighborhoods within the urban growth boundary experiencing the worst access.

Transportation

Access to public transportation is generally good throughout the region. However, areas where demographics are changing due to displacement from inner city neighborhoods need greater attention.

Other factors influencing health

The per capita income in Multnomah County was \$30,612 for White non-Hispanics, \$20,795 for Asians, and \$13,231 for African Americans. Hispanic per capita income was \$13,037. (2006 Census Bureau American Community Survey)

At \$9.07 per capita, the State of Oregon's public health budget ranks 43rd of all US states (Trust for Americas Health).

